A BOY KNIGHT

MARTIN J. SCOTT, S.J.

From Father Scott

to

Junior Schuele

at St. Matthews Parish "Boys Retreat" 1925

A Boy Knight

By MARTIN J. SCOTT, S. J.

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NEW YORK
P. J. KENEDY & SONS

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TO

MR. AND MRS. NICHOLAS F. BRADY

WHOSE SOCIOLOGICAL ACTIVITIES HAVE BROUGHT THE SPIRIT OF KNIGHTHOOD INTO MANY HOMES

THIS VOLUME

IS RESPECTIVELY DEDICATED

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Chapter I

Cross-Roads

IT was late November and a little snow had fallen. Three boys were on their way down Park Avenue to school—the Regal High. One of the boys, Frank Mulvy, carried his lunch in his pocket. He did not live far away, but his mother was to be out for the day and had put up a lunch for him. As the boys came down the avenue, an old man whom they had never seen before, met them. He asked them for a few cents to get something to eat. It happened that none of the boys had any money. They told him so, and passed on. The man gave them a searching look and groaned.

When the boys had gone a block and turned the corner at Gody's drug store, Frank Mulvy made an excuse to loiter a moment, and then turning quickly, ran up the avenue. He over-

took the poor man and handing him the lunch which he had in his pocket, said:

"I'm sorry I have no money, sir, but here is something to eat."

"God bless you, boy," the old man sighed, as he almost snatched the little package.

The boy had no lunch that day.

Frank Mulvy was fourteen years old. He was a freshman at Regal, a member of the football team and the secretary of the "Boy's Club" attached to St. Leonard's Church. The office was elective and Frank had been chosen with hardly a dissenting vote.

The Club met three times a week in a large room of the parish house where the boys, about ninety in number, had a good library, billiard tables, games of various kinds and other attractions. Once a week the priest in charge, Father Boone, gave them a little talk on something of interest and profit to boys. Usually these talks were very welcome to the lads as Father Boone did not so much talk virtue as illustrate it, and that not merely by stories, but rather by his own way of saying and doing things. The boys liked him.

Frank was Father Boone's right hand man, and the director was glad that the boys had

elected him secretary, although he had given no indication of his preference. He allowed the boys the greatest latitude and found generally that they did the right thing. While Father Boone would be the last to give it as the cause, the fact was that they did the right thing because he himself did. He always endeavored to create an atmosphere of trust and manliness. The morale of the Club was proof that he had succeeded, for altogether the boys were a fine set, and the director considered that Frank was the best of the lot.

Father Boone was very liberal, but if he once drew a line he never allowed it to be crossed. The boys knew that. They used to say, "Father Boone is all right but if he tells you what to do, you'd better do it."

One day, just five weeks before Christmas, Father Boone called Frank aside and said to him:

"I have a bit of good news for you. A friend who is interested in the work of the Club has given me one hundred dollars to spend as I like on you boys. You are all very fond of music, and I am thinking of buying some fine records for our victrola. What do you say?"

Frank replied, "I guess it's all right, Father. You know best what the boys want."

The priest added, "I have another plan also, but I am not certain which to adopt. I was thinking of taking the boys down to hear John McCormack. We could get ninety seats together—it's far ahead—and treat the crowd to a ride both ways. How does that strike you?"

"Pretty good, Father," said Frank. "But," he continued, "suppose we put it up to the fellows. Then you are sure to satisfy them."

"Capital!" exclaimed the priest, "and now you go ahead and put it to a vote."

It was surprising how short a time it took to pass the word around. Soon every one knew that something out of the ordinary was up.

When the boys had assembled, Frank put the matter before the Club, and all without hesitation declared for John McCormack. They had heard his records on the victrola, and were desirous of seeing and hearing himself. When Frank informed the director, Father Boone said:

"That's all hunky dory," an expression he used when he was well satisfied, and when the

committee which the boys had sent to thank him for his kind thought appeared, he said:

"That's all right, boys; that's the best fun I get, doing something for you fellows."

After that, McCormack's were the only records to be heard in that club room. Every boy played his favorite, time and again.

"I wonder if he sings much better than his records," said Tommy Hefnan.

"Of course," retorted Dick Brian. "That is foolish question four million and two."

"O! I don't know," said Tommy. "I heard some records that were better than the performer. You remember that war song we had last year? Well, I heard his Nibbs himself sing it at a vaudeville show, and I liked the record better."

"Well, his Nibbs isn't McCormack," snapped Dick, "and you'll see the difference when you hear him."

So the boys were pretty well worked up over the concert, and awaited it eagerly. Most of them were in moderate circumstances and the limit of their entertainment was the movies. For them to see the great McCormack was what in the old days it meant to the country lads to see Barnum's Circus.

There were, as we have said, ninety boys in the Club, from eleven to fifteen years of age. When they got to sixteen, they were obliged to drop membership, and were encouraged to join the older boys' club, which admitted those from sixteen to nineteen. Most of the lads did that. In Father Boone's time, however, the boys hated to leave the younger club. It was amusing to see the growing youngsters torn between two emotions. On the one hand, every boy wanted to be big, to get closer to manhood. On the other, he dreaded the loss of the Club. For Father Boone certainly made it a very desirable place. It was because membership was so highly regarded that he was able to set a high standard for his boys and keep them up to it.

For every vacancy there was a score on the waiting list. Every mother in the parish wanted her boy to get into the Club. Frequently the director would be stopped in the street by a good mother who would say to him, "Father, my boy Jimmie is one of the best boys in the parish. Won't you please have him in mind for the next vacancy?"

Now and then, however, a boy of the wrong sort would get into the Club; one whom

nothing good seemed to affect. The boys themselves usually took such a one in hand, and made it pretty hot for him. They knew that their own welfare depended on the general conduct, and they took good care of it.

Bill Daly was what the boys called a "tough nut." They nicknamed him "Bull". "Bull" had got into the Club by the kind-heartedness of Father Boone. His father was a drunkard and his mother was a hard-working woman. Bill was the only child. Father Boone had got him a good job downtown and placed him in the Club to help him along and to put a little refinement in him. The boys knew that he was Father Boone's ward, as it were, and tolerated a lot from him, but Bill took the consideration which he received as a sign of his "pull," of his superiority over the others. He was the oldest boy in the Club and different from all the others. On several occasions a fist fight was barely averted when he tried to bully some smaller boy.

The boys never told Father Boone about Bill,—first, because the director had let them know that he did not want any tattling, and secondly, because most of them felt sorry for the fellow, and saw that his one chance for

making something of himself was by remaining in the Club. If they fancied that Father Boone knew nothing about Bill, however, they were much mistaken. In fact, there was little going on that he did not know. But as he said, "A man has to see a lot and yet not see it." For reasons of his own, he saw and yet did not see the doings of Bill.

When Frank Mulvy was elected secretary, Bill had tried hard to get the place, but as soon as he saw that the sentiment was all for Frank, he joined in. Nevertheless, he had it in for Frank. He was tired hearing the fellows say "Frank this," and "Frank that." He could not understand how, without trying for it at all, Frank got the esteem and affection of everybody.

One day Father Boone came into the Club and announced that he wanted a very important errand done and that he was going to select a boy for it. Everybody thought Frank was "it," and to the surprise of all, Bill was chosen. He threw out his chest, gave a superior look at the crowd, especially at Frank, and received his commission. As soon as he was gone, Father Boone called the boys together and said, "I know you are surprised that I

am fooled in William Daly. I can see it in your faces. Boys, I know all about him. I have been on the point of discharging him several times. But if he is sent out of this Club, he will go to the devil. Of course I know there is a limit. But in his case that limit is going to be 'the limit.' "

Saying that, he left.

Frank immediately said to the crowd, "I say, fellows, let's give Bill a show. He means well. His home is a pretty bad place, and I guess he is not half to blame." The boys agreed with Frank.

When Bill returned, he came in swaggering and going over to Frank, he said, "You think you're the whole bunch, don't you? Well, you see you're not. I'd punch you, you stuck-up kid, if you were not the pet of the Boss." Bill's language was as low as his ideals.

The blood rushed to Frank's face, his hands tightened, his jaws set, and he was about to resent the charge, when, recalling what Father Boone had just said, he suddenly relaxed and smiled. "That's all right, Bill; we'll be friends yet."

Bill swaggered over to a set of boys at the

other end of the room, and said, loud enough for all to hear, "A great kid, that Mulvy. He don't know when he gets a slap in the face. I just gave him a good one, but he takes it like a sissie."

"Now, look here, 'Bull,' I want none of your 'sissie,' do you understand?" Frank exclaimed, his voice trembling.

"Who are you calling 'Bull,' little girl?" roared Bill. "Another word and I'll smash you."

The "sissie" and the "little girl" got under Frank's skin. For a moment he neither saw nor heard anything. He was ready to fight. His blood tingled. But he gripped himself and swallowed his retort just as Daly, mistaking the silence for cowardice, rushed forward and struck him a blow in the face. Like a flash, the color came to Frank's face. He had gone *the limit* and the lion in him was let loose. Any fellow who had played football against Frank would have known what that meant. With set, determined face, speaking not a word, he squared off.

"So you want to fight, do you, you doll?" roared Daly.

Not a word from Frank. Instead, he held

his attitude of fight and approached his tormentor.

"Oh, you are pie for me, candy kid. I could lick you with one hand. You'll never want another fight when this is over."

Never a word from Frank. The crowd made a circle. The whole thing happened so suddenly that it was in full swing before they knew it.

As Frank came up to Daly, the bully hauled off and gave him a straight blow on the forehead. It rang like a ball from a bat. It staggered Frank. But he came right on. He did not strike a blow, but simply stood up before his opponent with arms at guard. Again Daly launched a blow. This time it took Frank on the top of the head. Bill was nearly two years older than his opponent and much taller and heavier. But Frank had grit. The fellows said that they never knew anyone who had so much "sand" as Mulvy. He needed it now. Daly was infuriated. He rushed at Frank hitting him on the head and neck and chest. All of a sudden, without a word, straight from the shoulder, Frank sent a terrific jolt to Daly's jaw. He roared and tore and threatened. Frank did not open his

mouth. He kept his eyes on Bill, and was cool and firm. He waited for the next on-rush. It came like a whirlwind. Bill crashed into him, swinging blindly in his rage, hitting here and there. Frank took his punishment and coolly studied his opponent.

Bill rose on his toes to come down with a swing on Frank's face. In an instant, while Bill's face was completely unguarded, Frank drove home a blow right on his nose. The blood spurted and at the sight of it, both fighters clinched and pounded as hard as they could. Finally, in the struggle, Frank slipped and fell. Immediately, Bill was on top of him.

By this time, Bill realized that he was in a fight. Frank's blows, though fewer, told effectively and Bill began to fear that if the fight went on, he might lose it. So, as he had Frank under him, he yelled, "Do you give up?" No reply. "Do you hear, do you give up? I have given you enough. If you say you are licked, I'll let up." Not a word from Frank. Instead, he wriggled from under, worked himself free, smashed Daly a fierce blow on the ear, and another on the jaw. Bill had all he could take and as they stood up

again, face to face, the "Bull" and the "Girl" paused, glaring at each other.

"I'll stop now if you will," muttered Bill.

"Do you take back what you said?" shouted Frank.

"Yes," whispered Bill.

"Am I a sissie?" demanded Frank.

"No," replied Bill.

"Shake," said Frank, holding out his hand.

They gripped hands. It was over. The crowd got around Frank, patted him on the back, and in various ways showed him their approval. Daly, abandoned by everybody, slunk away towards the door to make a hasty exit. He knew he was done for. The Club was no longer a place for him. He was disgraced, "licked by a kid." But he would get square. Leave that to him.

As he was about to open the door to go out, Frank broke from the crowd and going toward Bill, said: "Daly, you are not such a bad fellow. You might have licked me if you had wanted to keep it up. I say, let's be friends."

"I'm no dude, I don't belong to your '*bunch*,'" he retorted angrily, as he slammed the door behind him.

(II)

Daly was angry with himself, with Mulvy, with the Club, even with Father Boone. He was desperate. Instead of going home, he waited around the corner. He was boiling with resentment. He must do something to square things. After thinking awhile he decided to try to "queer" the crowd with Father Boone and break off the McCormack treat. But how was he to do it? If he could only bring some discredit on the Club, it would hurt the fellows as well as Father Boone. That was it. He acted quickly on the thought. Going back, he waited on the opposite side of the street, in the shadows, until the last light in the Club was out. He knew a way of getting into the building by a basement window, but when he tried it, he found that it was locked. Fearing that someone might still be within, he withdrew to the opposite side of the street again and waited a half hour. When he was certain that there was nobody in the Club, he crossed over and tried one window after another. All were locked. He turned to the door under the front steps. It was bolted, as usual. Looking up to the story above, he saw a window slightly opened. But it was too high for

him to reach. Just then, a policeman came along. Bill heard his steps and concealed himself in the areaway. He began to reflect that he was taking a risk. "Suppose the cop caught me," he said to himself. But his resentment was greater than his caution, and so he kept at his design.

He figured that by a long reach from the railing of the steps to the window sill, he might get a hold and enter. Up he leaped to the railing, and by a supreme effort, clinched the window sill and swung over. It took him but a minute to open the window and enter. Once in, he went straight to the room where the fight had occurred. He threw everything about in disorder, broke several chairs, threw down two large pictures from the wall, overturned the victrola and records and made the place look like the scene of a mob fight. He then went upstairs to the library, threw the books around, damaged some, overturned a desk, upset a table and spilled ink on the floor. "I guess that's enough for one round," he said, and cautiously went to the window and got out unobserved.

Next morning when the janitor came to set things in order, he scarcely believed his eyes

as he looked upon the wreckage before him. He straightway went to Father Boone.

"Impossible, my good man!" the director exclaimed. "You must be mistaken."

"Perhaps I am," he replied, "and you may be mistaken too when you see it."

The janitor was so agitated and vehement that the priest went over to the Club rooms to see for himself. There it was. Worse, in fact, than the janitor had described. What did it mean? His boys! St. Leonard's Boys' Club! With the instinct which was part of his nature, he divined at once that this was an enemy act. Who the enemy was, what his motive, he could not say. But his instinct told him it was not his boys. He told the janitor to put everything in order. He sent for the carpenter to mend the chairs and tables and hang the pictures. He himself got some acid and removed the inkstains from the floor. The Club was never occupied except evenings, and by the time it was open, everything was in shipshape.

(III)

That night as the boys came in, in twos and threes, they talked over the fight, and what they were to do in regard to Daly. Of course

not one of them suspected that anything had occurred after they left. When Frank came in, they gave him a cheer. He was now the official and popular head of the crowd. He had won his leadership last night by the means most admired by boys, courage and generosity, and he took his honors modestly.

After talking on various phases of the fight, the crowd turned to Frank, who as yet had said nothing.

"What's the matter, old man? Why are you so glum?"

"O, nothing," answered Frank.

They went about their evening's amusements, some to play billiards, some to read, and some to hear the victrola, but they generally returned to talk over the events of the previous evening. Frank sat silent and moody. Soon Dick Brian came up to him. Dick was what you would call a little *man*. He was quiet, thoughtful, affectionate and very wise. Frank and Dick were close friends. Dick thought that Frank was the finest boy in the world, and Frank had intense admiration for Dick's fearlessness and candor.

"Well Frank, what's up?" asked Dick.

"O, is that you, Dickie boy?" replied Frank.

"Yes, it's me, but you are not you," answered Dick. "What's the matter? I guess I know."

"Well, what?"

"You are worried over the 'Bull' and the racket," whispered Dick.

"Put it there, kid," replied Frank, extending his hand. "You are a wise lad, you struck it right."

Dick was two years younger than Frank, but he had an old head. That made them confidants.

"Come upstairs, Dick, I want to talk to you."

Alone with Dick in the secretary's room, Frank began:

"Father Boone will be here soon. I don't know just how to act. If I considered myself only, it would be easy. I'd go and make a clean breast of the whole affair. But there is Daly, and the crowd. I know that Father Boone is tolerating a lot from Bill because he has hopes of setting him right. It'll be an awful blow to him if he knows that the crowd is down on Bill and that the secretary was the cause of it. I know you'll say that I'm not the cause of it, that I did only what any fellow would do.

But we fellows of the Club aren't just any fellows. A whole lot's been done for us, extra. And especially for me. I got all that last night, before I struck back. But gee, I lost my head when he called me a girl, and simply had to fight. I kept thinking of it all last night and what Father Boone'd say. Not that he minds a fight. You remember on the outing last month, two fellows had a scrap. He just said, 'It's better to let the bad blood out than to keep it in.' He didn't even ask who they were. And he never wants any tattling either. That is why I feel this affair so much, and also because Daly is concerned. Father Boone is so terribly decent with us that I just hate to think he will be disappointed in any of us, and that I couldn't take Daly's slurs and laugh them off."

"You big boob," put in Dick after listening gravely to all. "You'd be just what he called you if you did that."

"I know, I know," repeated Frank, "but I feel terribly sore about the whole thing."

"Take my advice, Frank, go direct to Father Boone when he comes in, and tell him the whole thing from A to Z. He'll understand. Besides, I'll bet a hat he knows it already."

"I hope he does," added Frank.

They went down to the crowd which was now all together. The fellows did not expect to see Daly, but some of them thought that he might show up to brave it out. When Father Boone came in, smiling as usual, a word for this lad, and that, a tap for Jack and a handshake for Tommy and Willie and John, no one would ever have suspected that he knew anything out of the ordinary.

Generally on entering, after greeting the boys, he went to his office and straightened out the details of the preceding day. After that he would circulate among the boys, asking one if his father got the job he recommended him to, another how his mother was, a third what his marks were for the last school month, and so on. He knew them all, and all about them. He was their big brother. In his presence there was no restraint. He knew them so well, and they understood him so well, that he was like one of them. If a dispute were on, and he came in, it went on just the same. He knew boys and loved them, and they realized it.

He was wise enough to know that boys are boys. That was the secret of his success. The

result was that he could do anything with them. A word from him and they would leave off what most pleased them. A suggestion from him and they would do what was hardest and ordinarily most disagreeable. Very kind he was, also firm as a rock. And they knew it. He never went back on his word, as they knew by experience. The consequence was that with very few words, he accomplished what he wanted done.

This evening he looked around at the crowd. There was something the matter. That was evident. He knew he could find out by asking but he never did that. He began now to observe. There was a restraint evident among the boys. That was unusual. Not so much hilarity. He ran his eye over the crowd. He could see at a glance, just who was and who was not present. Daly was always conspicuous, because he was so noisy, but Daly was not among those present tonight. Usually the boys were scattered, some in one room, some in another. Not so tonight. They were all in the same room. Generally they were interested in the games. Tonight they seemed to be interested in him. Putting things together, he concluded that the crowd as a crowd was

in the mixup, and that the boys were on the lookout for something to happen. Frank sat off in a corner looking pensive. That was not his way.

Poor Frank was in torture. He was hoping that Father Boone would go upstairs so that he could follow him and explain matters.

And Father Boone was hurt because no one volunteered an explanation. Surely Frank would say a word. But no, no one at all made any reference to the wreckage of the night before.

"Why don't they speak up? They're all concerned in it. It isn't a case of being an informer. They know I don't want tattlers around. But this is different. This is a serious matter. Damage was done. It is a question of justice. And they know my mind on that. And that secretary owes me a report. He is an official. I've told them often enough that when an official reports matters pertaining to his office, it is not 'squealing,' but duty. They all understand that; Frank especially. Well, I'll wait here fifteen minutes longer, and if they don't explain, I'll take action."

Father Boone went upstairs and after fifteen minutes left, in a very sober mood.

It was some minutes later that Frank, thinking the director was upstairs, went up to open his heart to him. But Father Boone was not in his office. Frank descended to the "gym," stayed awhile and then went home. He had a bad headache. The night before he had not slept. He could not eat. When he got home, however, he decided to get the thing off his mind before going to bed, and tired as he was, he started back to the Club, hoping to find Father Boone. But the priest had not returned. Hesitating a moment, he finally decided to go to the rectory and have it all over with. But at the rectory they told him that Father Boone was out on a sick call and might not be back for a couple of hours.

"Well, I've done my part," said Frank, and back home he went, somewhat relieved.

(IV)

Next night, Father Boone came into the Club not looking as pleasant as usual. He came late, too; not his wont. He greeted few, and his face showed firm. The boys whispered one to another, "He's on."

Frank now felt that he was a culprit. Something told him that Father Boone knew the

whole matter and that he was cut up because Daly was concerned. It was too late now to go to him and make a clean breast of it. What must Father Boone think of him for driving Daly out of the Club. Forgetting all his efforts to do the right thing, Frank saw only that Father Boone was offended. He blamed himself as the cause of it and gloomily admitted that he had not been man enough to inform the director. That hurt him. Once more, when the priest went up to his office after a few minutes stay with the boys, Frank was determined to go to him and take the consequence.

Meanwhile, Father Boone had come to a decision. There had been some rowdyism in the Club. Furniture was broken, serious damage was done. It certainly was the work of more than one or two. By their very attitude, the boys showed their guilt. Yet no one, not even the secretary, had explained. Taking down a large sheet of paper, the director wrote on it in big letters,

"The McCormack treat is off,
JEROME BOONE."

Pressing a button, he summoned Frank.

As Frank heard the bell, a lump formed in his throat. He felt sure that every fellow in the room could see how his knees shook. But he was glad, in a way, that matters were coming to a head. He expected that Father Boone would give him a good scolding and that that would settle it. He was all prepared for the interview, but was not admitting, even to himself, how near the tears were to flowing.

As Frank approached the desk, Father Boone was writing. Frank hoped he would not look up, and as he stood there for a second, it seemed an hour. Then, without pausing or turning toward Frank, Father Boone said in a low, measured voice: "Take that notice, Mulvy, and put it up on the board below." That was all. Frank stood perfectly still for a moment, clutching the jamb of the door while Father Boone went on writing. If the director had turned but a little, he would have seen agony and anguish in Frank's face, and he would have understood. But he kept on writing and Frank remained standing, unable to move a step.

Then a hard feeling crept into the boy's heart. He felt that he was being dealt with unjustly, that he was condemned unheard.

Every bit of his pride came to the top and the boy who, a few seconds before, was ready to blame himself for Father Boone's disappointment, now would not have yielded an inch. Father Boone was Frank's ideal. He thought more of him than of anyone outside his own family. But suddenly he saw the priest as a hard-hearted and unjust man. For the moment he was glad to find that he was in an out-and-out struggle. "No explanations now," he reflected, "time for all that is past." The director had not given him a chance to do the right thing and now he, too, would show his mettle.

There was an air of defiance about Frank as he walked down the stairs and posted the notice on the board.

The crowd gathered quickly. As they read the brief lines on the notice-board, the wave of disappointment that passed over them could almost be felt in the air.

Of course the boys had told their parents of the McCormack treat and now it was off. That meant explanations. They usually kept the Club's affairs entirely to themselves, but the McCormack affair was altogether different —good news to those at home. How could

they explain why it was off? Everybody knew that Father Boone never made promises without fulfilling them. Now every mother and sister and—yes—every father would want to know why this treat was cancelled. These and other things ran through the boys' minds. But, above all, the sentiment most keenly felt was regret that Father Boone had had to take such action. They knew he was even more delighted to do them a kindness than they were to receive one. Dick Brian expressed the feeling of the crowd when he said: "Gee, it's tough on us, but it's worse on Father Boone."

Frank heard the comments with a cynical smile. He said not a word, but was rather pale. One of the lads inquired of him, "How did Father Boone find it out?"

"Search me!" Frank replied.

"I say," whispered another, "I'll bet 'Bull' squealed to get square with the crowd."

Tommy Hefnan edged up to Dick. "What's up, anyway? Father Boone never did anything before if the fellows scrapped. He usually let them have it out and appeared not to know about it. What's up now that he is soaking the whole crowd for this scrap?"

"Search me!" answered Dick. "The only

line I can get on it is there's something else that we don't know. We've got to take our medicine, of course, and you can be sure Father Boone knows what he's doing. If there is anything wrong, it's somewhere else."

"That's what I say," echoed Tommy as he sauntered off.

Frank and Dick lived near each other and generally went home together. That night, Frank tried hard to assume indifference, but wise Dick saw through the disguise and finally asked him point blank, if he did not feel cut up over the affair.

"No, I don't," Frank almost yelled, in reply. "It's not a square deal. If Father Boone has anything against us, why doesn't he come out with it, and not hit blindly and in the dark?"

"Well, I get what you're aiming at," answered Dick, "but you know, Frank, that Father Boone is the squarest man going. He knows what he's doing, and there's a reason. I'll stand by him, no matter what happens."

This cut Frank like a knife. He knew Dick was manly and wise. He also realized that every word he said was true. Nevertheless, he felt like punching him for saying it.

The rest of the way, they walked on in silence, until they came to parting, when Frank abruptly put out his hand and said, "You're all right, Dick." Then, as the younger boy turned the corner, Frank reflected:

"Yes, he's all right. The kid has more balance than I have."

At the door of the Mulvy apartment, Frank met his mother. She saw at once that whatever was troubling her boy, was even worse tonight than it had been before. Then she had said nothing but tonight she was truly alarmed at Frank's pallor.

"Why, what on earth is the matter, dear?" she exclaimed, as he entered the room. "You are as white as a sheet and trembling all over." As she spoke she put her arms around him and gave him that silent sympathy which only a mother can impart. That was the one thing Frank could not resist. He could fight anything but kindness. At his mother's gentle pressure, his eyes filled and for a moment he could not answer. His words were all choked back by strange sounds in his throat, but his mother waited and presently, when he was sufficiently composed, the whole story

came tumbling out. He told his mother all that had happened. He omitted nothing. For a while she made no comment. Then with the tenderness of a mother who knows her boy, she said,

"Frank, you've done nothing to be ashamed of. There's more to that affair, I'm sure. And above all, Father Boone does not act rashly. Remember now, mother says so."

Frank felt a weight lifted from his heart. He went to his room, knelt down at his bedside, under the crucifix hanging from the wall, and making an act of contrition for his faults of the day, asked God to give him the grace to do right always. Then turning to a little shrine at the head of the bed, where a large picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was hung, he said, "O Heart wounded for me, give me strength to bear this hurt for love of Thee."

He arose, feeling that he had offered something to our Lord. That brought peace to his soul and a few minutes later he was fast asleep.

(V)

By the time Frank was ready for breakfast next morning, Mrs. Mulvy had made up her mind to see Father Boone and find out what the trouble was. She was certain that

there was something back of it all. She knew Father Boone, and she knew Frank, and further, she knew how they esteemed each other. Father Boone had often stopped her in the street to tell her what a fine boy Frank was. And Frank was never tired talking about Father Boone, admiring him for this and for that, but mainly for himself.

Nothing was said by mother or son on the important topic until Frank was leaving the house to go to school. Then, as he kissed her, he said, "Mother, I want you to promise me something."

"Very well, dear."

"Remember now, it's a promise."

"Certainly, Frank."

"Well, mother, I want you to promise that you won't say anything about what I've told you and that you will not let Father Boone know I told you. Even if you should meet him *accidently*," he said slyly, "you are not to let on."

She hesitated a moment.

"You promised, Mother. It's too late now to consider," he urged.

"Well, just as you say, dear," she answered. And she felt that perhaps it was better to let

the matter adjust itself, after all. "True love never runs smoothly," she mused, "and I am sure Father Boone and Frank are very fond of each other."

When Frank got back to school and mingled with the boys, the peace of the night before and his mother's assurances all seemed to vanish. He could not see any justice in the way Father Boone had acted.

"It was entirely unfair," he kept thinking. "The whole thing was out of measure with the fault. After all, a scrap is a scrap. Lots of fellows fight and make up and it's all over. I made up with Daly, or at least I tried to. Why should the crowd be punished for one or two? I know what I'll do. I'll go straight to Father Boone this evening and tell him the whole thing. Then if he wants to, he can punish me, not the whole crowd."

Meanwhile, in his room at the rectory, Father Boone too was considering the same subject. "Boys are not ingrates, as a rule," he reflected. "True, they may be thoughtless and impulsive, but I have generally found them appreciative. But there is Mulvy,—straight and open as he usually is,—and he hasn't offered a word of explanation. He had

his chance, when I sent for him to post that notice but—not a word. And he surely saw I was indignant. It's not like him. What can it be? Is he afraid of the crowd? Hardly. But I can't get away from that wholesale disorder and breakage—the work of a mob. Those boys seem to care for me—but—they know how this kind of thing affects me. They've had two days to reflect. Not one boy to say a word! It is not the thing in itself that I care about. There's a big bill for damages, but I don't give a fig for that. It's the principle back of it all. Here—all these years, I've been holding up high standards to them and they fall down just when they should stand erect. I hated to call off that McCormack treat, but —what could I do? Well, I'll have to see it through now." And at that he set his jaws, and it was easy to realize that he would see it through.

He had hardly finished his musings when the rectory door-man came to his room and said that a young man was below to see him. He went down and found Dick Brian awaiting him. It was not Father Boone's nature to be at odds with any one, and so when he came upon Dick thus unexpectedly, forgetting for

the instant that war was on between him and the club boys, he saluted the lad wholeheartedly. The next instant, recollecting that there was a hostile camp to deal with, he quickly tightened up and said, "Well, my boy, what is it?"

Dick, though ordinarily very self-possessed, was not quite composed under the circumstances. He summoned as much calm as he could and said, "I have come, Father, to say that there must be some mistake. The boys would not do anything to displease you. It's not the McCormack treat that they are thinking about. It's you. Of course, they feel sore that it is off, but they can stand that, but we don't want you to feel that we are not grateful."

It was quite a speech even for Dick, but he got it out and every word rang true. The director realized it, which only increased the mystery. "If the boys were so considerate of him," he reflected, "why did they not explain? They should know that he would do what was right in the matter. If there were any allowances to be made, they ought to know that he would make them. It was not as if it were an individual affair. The whole Club

was in question. A riot had occurred. And just because the boys knew he never went about prying into things he had a right to expect a full explanation. But Dick's speech didn't explain."

Father Boone's next remark was true to his principle of not asking for information in such cases. "And is there anything else you wish to say?" Poor Dick! That took his breath away. He stood silent for a moment and when the priest turned to leave, he picked up his hat and started for the door. But just at that moment something—was it the suggestion of a trembling lip in the last glimpse he had of Dick's face, or just his own kind instincts that made Father Boone turn back?

"I thank you, little man," he said, "for coming to say to me what you did. I *am* put out by this affair and I don't know yet what to think of it. At any rate, Dick, you did the right thing in coming here." So saying, he opened the door for the lad, who went out not knowing just what to make of it all.

(VI)

On the same evening Dick met Frank on the way down to the Club. He began at once:

"I say, Frank, Father Boone is terribly cut up over this thing. Do you know what I think? Something or somebody has set him wrong. It is not his way to take on so about a scrap that he didn't even see. I tell you, old man, I believe that 'Bull' has got in some dirty work. He has not been around for two days, and how do we know what he may have told Father Boone?"

"Wise guy you are, kid. I have been wondering myself, but I was too stupid to reason out any kind of explanation. I'd not be surprised if you have it right. At any rate, I guess I'll try to see Father Boone tonight and have it out. I should have done it before, but I got my back up when he ignored me, and became as stiff as he was stout."

When they reached the Club, the fellows were all sitting around discussing the matter in groups. The Club was not itself, that was clear. As Frank and Dick entered, Tommy Hefnan exclaimed, "Say, fellows, let's send a committee to Father Boone. Let's elect a committee to go and straighten out the fuss."

To this some of the boys objected, maintaining that it looked like weakness. Others said that it might seem as if they were doing

it to get the McCormack treat back. To this one of the older lads rejoined, "Let us tell him before we begin, that we know the treat is off and that although we regret it, we regret something else much more."

"That's not half bad," echoed several.

"And it's the truth, too," muttered Tommy.

There it was again—in plain words. What really worried every boy in the Club was the fact that somehow, they had disappointed Father Boone. Every fellow there owed him something for special favors in addition to all he had done for the crowd as a whole. And every fellow knew that the very best way to pay Father Boone back, was to be the kind of boy that the director wanted him to be.

What was to be done? Everybody was too devoted to Father Boone to deliberately ignore one of his very strongest principles—"*the tell-tale is not a man of honour*"—and of all the crowd only two had a right to speak, because only two had actually taken part in the fight. Frank had tried to see Father Boone, without success thus far—and Bill evidently was steering clear of the affair.

Even then, why should a scrap cause the

director such great worry—they thought—unless he was angry because it had happened right after what he had said about Bill, and had resulted in his leaving the Club. As for Frank—well, every boy knew that he would do the same himself under the circumstances.

As for Father Boone, the more he thought of the whole affair, the more he was sure of his first decision. It was a free fight in which most of the boys had had some part; only Frank deserved special censure because he had failed in his official capacity. By now the director was beginning to be concerned about Daly who had not appeared at the Club since the disorder. He did not want the boy to get away from his influence and so decided to call at his home.

While the boys were discussing the advisability of sending a committee to the director, he was on his way to Daly's house. When he got there, he was met at the door by Mrs. Daly. She was a large slovenly woman. The home was like herself. It was on the top floor of a side street tenement. A dark and crooked stairs led up to it. Father Boone reflected that some people were like that stairway, and when he reached the top floor and

saw before him Bill Daly's mother, he thought that poor Bill was to be pitied more than anything else. "I must hold on to that boy if possible," he mused. "After all, it's not they who are well who need the physician, but they who are ill."

Mrs. Daly conducted him into a dirty room. He was asked to please pass through to the parlor. Groping his way through two dark bed-rooms, with no light or ventilation except from a small window opening upon a shaft, he came to the parlor. Apparently, it was more of a clothes room than anything else. On the couch, which was a bed at night, on the table, and on the chairs were articles of wearing apparel. Father Boone had to remove an armful of assorted garments from a chair to get a seat. His hostess was not at all concerned. It was her normal surroundings.

Mrs. Daly was glad to see the priest. Her heart was good and her religion meant something to her in spite of everything. But she was dragged down by conditions, like many another. Some natures are superior to environment. Her's was not.

"And how is Mr. Daly?" began the priest.

"Drinking as usual," she replied.

"Well, that's a great cross," he continued, "but I hope a turn for the better will come, some time."

"I hope it comes before it's too late," she sighed. "He has all of us nearly as bad as himself with his ways. He drinks his money and leaves nothing for the home, but what Willie brings in. God bless you, Father, for the job you got Willie. It is the only steady money that comes in."

"How is William?" asked the priest. "I've missed him from the Club the last few days, so I have just dropped in to see how he is; I hope he is a good boy."

"Oh, Willie is a good enough boy, he might be worse," answered Bill's mother. "His father sets him no good example, and the poor boy has to put up with a lot of abuse. The wonder is that he is any good at all."

She wiped her face with her apron, and sat down on the edge of a chair. She was evidently in a mood to talk. The kindliness of the priest seemed to invite her confidence, for she began:

"Mike was a good man before the drink got him. We had our nice little home and his wages came in as regular as Saturday night. We

went to church together every Sunday morning and God was good to us. But when Willie was about six years old, his father got a job over at King's automobile place. He was ambitious and started in and learned how to drive a taxi. He was out day and night. His money came in fast, and he was good to me and Willie.

"At first, everything went all right, and I thanked God. But soon, he began to leave off Church on Sunday from time to time. After a while, he dropped it entirely. Then he got in with a bad set. It was not long before he came home under the influence. I cried before him and begged him to let the liquor alone. He did for a while, but he began again and kept it up. Then he lost his job. He got another easy enough but he kept at the drink. And then he began to hold back his money. And it wasn't everyday that we had something in the house to eat. I had to sell things from the house to buy food. If I didn't, he would come home drunk and start a fight. And when there was nothing more to sell he began to beat me. If Willie cried, he beat him. The poor boy was often black and blue. Things went on from bad to worse. I had to have him

arrested, although it broke my heart. It was a disgrace to us all. Willie was ashamed to go out and play with the other boys. One day as he was going along the street, two boys yelled at him and called his father bad names. Willie liked his dad, even if he was in jail, because he knew what a good father he was once.

"When the boys yelled at Willie, he got afraid and ran. But they ran after him. I suppose if he stood, they wouldn't have chased him. They caught him and beat him. He tried to get away and then he struck out. You see, Father, Willie was a big boy for his age, and very strong. He takes after me. But he never knew his strength. Well, this time he just struck out. He knocked one of the boys down, gave another a fine black eye, and both of them took to their heels. It soon got around that my Willie was a terror. All the boys got afraid of him. He had his own way after that in every gang, and he got into a lot of scrapes, but he was always good to his mother.

"When his father got out of jail, he was surprised to see the difference in Willie. Well, to make a long story short, the father has been drinking ever since, and that's nearly

eight years ago, and my heart is broken. If it were not for little Willie, I don't know what I'd do."

The priest was a good listener. Although this was but another of the many similar stories which he had heard, there was something pathetic in the mother's pride, and in her love of Willie.

The home explained itself now. Poor woman. Discouraged and without sufficient means, she had drifted and the home had drifted with her, and Willie too.

Just then footsteps were heard, and as the door opened Bill stood there. He was amazed on seeing the priest. It flashed on him that he was found out but he didn't want his mother to know. He made a sign to the priest to say nothing for the present. Father Boone understood it at once and was glad to see this consideration of the boy for his mother, although it didn't tell him how much Bill knew of the Club mystery.

Daly was a shrewd lad, and after his mother withdrew, he kept his composure. He had to find out first how much the priest knew. Was it just the fight he came to see about or the wreckage? And how could he handle it so that

even if everything came out, Father Boone would not cause him the loss of the job he had got him? Bill decided to fence as cleverly as possible and not tell a bit more than he had to. The priest began.

"Well, William, I hope you are not ill. I've missed you from the Club the past few nights?"

"O, I'm all right," answered Bill.

"Have you any reason for staying away?" asked the priest. There was silence for a moment.

"He is fishing," thought Bill.

Father Boone looked him steadily in the eye and repeated, "I asked you, Willie, if there was any reason for your staying away?"

"Better ask Mulvy," Bill replied, with a grin.

Father Boone's heart sank. He wanted to clear Frank—and everybody else—but here was the secretary's name again. Bill's answer and his manner both implied that Frank was in the affair deeper than the director had even suspected.

"I hope," he said aloud, "I shall not be disappointed in you, William. No matter what has happened, I want you to continue

in the Club." With that he took his departure. But as he left the house he reflected that if William Daly ever got away from his influence, he might go down hill fast. There was one thing that gave him hope, and that was the boy's love for his mother. He knew that a boy who was so fond of his mother had something to work on.

(VII)

Down the dark and crooked stairs Father Boone made his way. When he got to the street floor and opened the door and took in the clear sunlight, he thought, "Will this dark passage of mind in which I find myself terminate in a clear understanding?" While going along he reflected that so far every step had only led into darker ways. He had tried to convince himself that Frank was not cognizant of the mischief. He could not understand how such a boy would fail him. He felt as mean for himself as he did for Frank. To be so utterly deceived in a boy! Frank should have reported, it, even though he had no part in it. Decision and consequences should be left to the director of the Club.

When Frank had taken office, it was made

clear to him that the secretary as an officer was obliged to keep the director informed concerning matters of importance. This wreckage was a matter of the greatest importance. It had taken him a whole day to restore the place and had cost him no small sum of money. Besides, it was not only that; the breakage indicated a big disturbance. There had been a free fight, evidently, and bad blood. Perhaps there was a division in the Club. It was Mulvy's business to report the affair and leave the rest to the director. He failed to do so. That in itself, in a boy like him, was worse by far than a dozen fights.

Every thing tended to convince Father Boone that Frank had taken a false step. In this indignant mood, he reached the Club about half an hour before closing time. The boys were waiting for him. He was hardly seated in his office, when he heard a knock at the door. Looking up he saw three boys before him. "Well?" said Father Boone sternly, for by now he was in a fighting mood. The committee consisted of Frank, Dick and Tommy. Frank was spokesman.

"We have come, please, Father, in regard to the trouble in the Club. We have been

chosen as a committee to see you about it. We . . ." He got no further.

"We!" shouted the director. "We! Is this committee secretary of the Club or are you?—you sir, Frank Mulvy. Here it is the third day since the disgraceful affair occurred and you —you sir, Mr. Frank Mulvy, Secretary, have kept me in the dark on a matter that it was your official duty to report! Do you understand, sir! that you are the secretary of this Club; and you have duties as well as privileges?"

Poor Frank! If some one had struck him a blow between the eyes, he could not have been half so stunned. He had to exert all his power to master his feelings. He tried to speak. His throat refused to let the words out. Was he to go away again misunderstood? Was he to have the agony of it all over again? He was helpless, speechless. And there sat the director, indignant and angry.

While Frank was trying to get himself together, the director arose, dismissed them, and left his room and the Club.

(VIII)

After the interview, if such it could be called, the committee went back to the

crowd. On the way downstairs, Dick turned to the spokesman. "Why didn't you speak up, Frank?" Frank's soul at that moment was on fire.

"Speak up?" he fairly yelled, "and what were you 'boobs' doing? Why didn't you back me up! You stood there like dummies. You'd think we were culprits the way he sailed into us. And neither of you opened your mouths."

"That was your job," retorted Dick, "and you got cold feet as soon as he looked at you. I thought you had more sand."

"Sand!" echoed Frank, "maybe you'd do better. Didn't you have your chance yesterday at the rectory? And you said yourself that you went out of the place like a sheep. Don't talk to me about 'sand'. You know yourself it's not lack of courage, either on your part or mine. I could face any one else and have it out. But when I saw his face, and heard his voice, I just wilted. You can't fight a man that's already wounded. The thing is hurting him worse than it hurts us. But I'll be blamed if I know what's up. It's more than that scrap we had, I'm sure of that."

By this time they were down with the rest of the boys.

"Well?" they exclaimed anxiously.

"It's all up," said Frank. "He wouldn't even listen to us. He gave me an awful roast."

"Gosh, fellows, it's tough," added Dick. "You should have seen the way he fired at us. Before we caught our breath, he up and left. We stood stock still for a moment, and didn't know where we were."

"It seems," said Frank, "that he is terribly put out because I did not officially report the matter."

"Well, you'd think there was a robbery or a murder or something like that, the way you fellows talk," said Ned Mullen. "A scrap is a scrap, and that's all there is to it," he added, "and I don't see the reason for all this fuss, except it may be because he is angry that an official was in it."

He paused for a moment and, as the crowd seemed to concur with him, he continued, "I say, Frank, why don't you write him a note? He can't fire at that, nor run away from it. If you write the note, I'll take it to him, or if you don't like that, mail it."

The proposal struck the fellows as sensible and practicable. Frank agreed to have the note ready by the next night and to read it to the crowd before sending it. After a little further talk, they wound up the evening and started for home.

As Ned was going out, Frank signalled him to hang back a little. He gave the same hint to Dick. In a few minutes the three were together, Frank, Dick and Ned.

Ned Mullen was one of the smallest boys of the Club. He was a bundle of nerves and laughter. Wherever Ned was, there was mirth. Everybody liked him. These three were close friends. They were three of a kind. Ned had won his class-medal three years in succession. Dick was always first or second in his class, and besides he had had the great distinction of winning the diocesan gold medal for the best English essay. Frank had led his class as far back as the boys could remember.

When they were alone, Frank said to Ned, "Well, little bright eyes, you've certainly saved the situation. I was just about desperate when you 'butted in.' I had made up my mind to resign and clear out alto-

gether. But I guess if Father Boone gets our explanation, it will fix things all right."

"Why didn't you go to him in the beginning, Frank?" asked Ned.

"I did, kid, but I got cold feet." And then he told Dick and Ned all that had occurred from the start.

"There's more to it than appears," suggested Dick.

"You said it," added Ned, and then continued, "I never saw Father Boone like this before. The fellows have got into lots of worse scrapes than this, and he only laughed. Why, you remember that day in the woods last month, on the outing. Do you suppose he didn't know all about that fight between Barry and Dolan? And he never said a word. Except about a week after, if you noticed, he wanted two boys to go on an errand to Bailey's and he sent them. It turned out that they had to help at putting on labels for the Hospital Fair and Mrs. Bailey gave them a dollar each. They came back chums. Father Boone doesn't 'grouch' or snarl if a fellow breaks out. He just says nothing, or else mends matters quietly in his own way."

"Say, Ned, that's quite a speech," exclaimed Dick, a bit envious. "You ought to have been on that committee."

At that "Bright Eyes" chuckled and soon he had the others laughing.

After a moment Frank announced, "I want you fellows to help me out with this note. I never did anything like it before. I've written lots of compositions. But this is diplomatic work."

Ned tapped his forehead and took on a look of deep thought. Dick coughed and struck the attitude of a thinker.

"O, laugh if you like, but if you had been through what I have, you wouldn't think it was a joke," muttered Frank.

"Well, what do you want us to do?" asked Dick.

"Put our heads together and send the right kind of note," answered Frank.

"I say," suggested Dick, "suppose we each write a note and the one that's best, goes."

"Good idea," replied Frank, "and let's do it now, right here."

So they sat down to frame the note. For ten minutes not a word was spoken. Each boy at his own place was poring over a few

lines he had written and then scratched, and then written again.

The silence was broken at last by Frank's voice exclaiming, "Well, who's through?" No reply. "I say fellows, I can't get started."

"Ditto," echoed Dick.

"Me too!" chimed in Ned.

Each boy had about ten pages partly written and scratched or torn. They had never before realized the arduous task of a diplomat. For this had to be a real diplomatic note. A lot was at stake, and a single word might spoil everything. At least so they fancied.

"Let's do it at home, and get down here early tomorrow night and settle it," said Dick.

"Agreed," exclaimed Frank and Ned together. And so hearty was their approval that they left without even putting the stopper on the ink bottle, let alone picking up the scribbled and torn papers.

Chapter II

The New Quest

The diplomats had hardly gone ten minutes when Father Boone came into the Club to get something he had forgotten in his indignant exit. On his way down from the office he passed through the library, and of course noticed the disordered papers on the table. The sheets were scribbled on and scratched and some were crumpled and torn. He paused to put things a bit in order, and his eye caught his own name on one of the papers. It began, "Dear Father Boone," and the same salutation headed several more of the sheets. "Oho, what's this?" he exclaimed. As the note was addressed to him, and lying there on the open table, he read:

"Dear Father Boone, I want to tell you in writing what I could not say to you in person. I tried to but somehow I could not."

This is as far as it went. On the next page

he found the following: "If I could only let you know that what hurts us most is that" and there it stopped. Another page had this, "I am sure there is something besides what we know, because we have done nothing that should so...." and there it ended.

He recognized Dick's handwriting on another sheet which read as follows: "Dear Father Boone, the boys realize that you must have a good reason for your dis....". That was the abrupt ending. "We know from experience that you never pun....." No more. Evidently Dick had got stuck fast.

The next pile of paper seemed to have little or nothing on the sheets. The first page the priest took up had "Ned" written all over it. For variety there was here and there "Ned Mullen." Evidently Ned was hard pressed for a start when he filled that sheet. On the next page there was a little more variety, but not much more literature. Here and there over the page were scrawled the names of Ned—Ned Mullen—Hank—Dick—Father Boone—Bull—and a drawing of a dog. Poor Ned must have been hunting hard for a good introduction.

Father Boone sat down near the table.

His thoughts had taken a new turn. These lads, he recalled, were on the committee. Evidently they wanted to set something before him, and were very much in earnest about it. Such insistence indicated a serious state of affairs. He should have heard them out instead of withdrawing in indignation. Still, he had done that only to impress them with the seriousness of their conduct.

When they saw his indignation, why did they not expostulate? But no, they said not a word. He would have been glad to hear their side, but at his first harsh words, they simply stood there. Yet this attempt at reaching him by note was a good sign. But why did they not give some evidence of regret? Their manner was not at all that of boys who felt they had seriously offended. And Frank, why *had he* not come like a man to talk it over? "I had thought," he reflected, "that Frank Mulvy had more consideration and more heart."

His eye fell just then on a half-torn sheet of paper on the floor. He picked it up from under the chair and found on it these lines:

"Dear Father: We are all terribly cut up and Frank most of all. We don't mind what's

done nor what may happen to us, but we feel awfully sorry for....."

That was all. That scrawl of Ned's fairly upset the priest. It was so candid, so genuine, so earnest. And it was not intended for anyone's eyes. It was an unsuccessful attempt to utter what was in the heart. Under the stress of the situation it was the most natural thing for the boys to leave the table littered with scraps to be swept up by the janitor next morning. His own coming in was an accident.

He got some relief in considering that these boys had stayed after the others, and filled eight or ten pages in an effort to explain. It meant that they were all right. He had known it all along! He had had to do violence to himself to believe that they would be guilty of anything inconsiderate. He knew how they felt towards him. These notes were a proof. Boys who were not grateful and considerate would not go to such pains to rectify matters. And here he had been for three days, firmly set against them. Perhaps it was their very regard for him that had kept back the explanations. He felt happy in thinking so, for his boys meant a

great deal to him. Tomorrow he would waive all formalities and precedents and settle things. He would hit the nail right on the head, state his feelings and his amazement at what had occurred and take whatever explanation they gave. These notes showed him that at heart the boys were the right kind. And that was the main thing.

He had got so far, when back again came the scene that had met his eyes when he entered the Club rooms with the janitor. Broken chairs, pictures down, ink on the floor, overturned tables.

"No . . ." thought he, "that is too much; for such vandalism there should have been an explanation or an apology. And I can't forget that Frank, no matter what his share or his feelings, should have been true enough to his duties to come and tell me. It's not the damage; it's the principle of the thing. What is the use of giving my time to the boys unless I can hold them up to certain standards? This is a social club under a priest's direction, and it should stand for what is best in the formation of character.

"Too much harm is done young fellows by giving in to sentiment. They may resent my

attitude now, but they will thank me for it later. If I take a firm stand, it will be a lesson to them for life. They will realize that the right way is the best way. They must be shown that although honor is not necessarily sanctity, it is, nevertheless, a very close attendant on it. Some boys think that if they don't break one of the Commandments, they are all right. They fail to see that the Commandments, although they must be absolutely kept, are only the big mile posts on the way of life. A boy may easily lose his way unless he cultivates the home virtues and the social virtues.

"That's what this club is for, to make the boys better sons and brothers and later on, better citizens. Anything that is mean must be shunned. A mean act, a mean fellow, must not be tolerated. If a boy is mean or indecent, and he can't be set right, he must go. It may hurt him and his prospects, but that is better than to hurt a crowd and their prospects. A disgraceful affair has happened in the Club, followed by dishonorable conduct. I'll see it through." And, hitting the table with his fist, he exclaimed, "I'll see it through."

(II)

Meanwhile, Frank had got home, and as he would not have much time tomorrow, he decided on writing his note to Father Boone before going to bed. The rest of the family were out, except his mother. He sat down at his study desk and took up his task. He did not know how to begin. If he could only get a start, the matter would be easy. But that start would not come. Finally he buried his head in his hands, half thinking, half discouraged.

"Why," he thought, "should I do any writing at all? I've been 'on the square.' I have no apology to make. It seems that the harder a fellow tries to be square, the harder he gets hit. There's 'Bull,' the cause of all this row. He's a regular thug. Yet he gets off easy. No worry, no hurt feelings, no penalty. And here I am, fretting and stewing, and I haven't done a thing I can put my hand on. Father Boone's treated me like a dog. I don't deserve that from him. He's done a lot for me, of course, but that doesn't give him the right to jump on me." Springing up, he brought his fist down on the table with a bang, and said aloud, "I'll not stand for it—from Father Boone or anybody else."

He looked up in defiance only to see his mother standing before him. Good mother that she was, she took in the situation at once. She did not say anything, but sat down alongside him, and took his hand in her own. When he had calmed down a bit, she said, "Won't you let mother help you, dear? You know we always make a good team."

Frank did not reply. He turned his face away. He was deeply agitated. His mother knew his tenderness and his strong will. She knew there was a tempest raging in his soul, and her heart ached for him. She put her arm about him and pressed him a little closer.

Presently he gasped in choked and vehement words: "I have . . . always . . . tried to do . . . my best . . . and this . . . is . . . the result." Again his mother felt the convulsive trembling through his body. But under her tactful sympathy this paroxysm soon passed off and with considerable calm he gave her the outlines of his trouble.

Mrs. Mulvy not only knew her boy, but she knew Father Boone as well. Her heart told her there was a misunderstanding, and a big one at that.

"Now, my dear," she began, "you have

suffered a lot but you have not done anything you should be sorry for."

Here Frank interrupted her with a kiss.

"But I am sure," she continued, "that Father Boone has suffered a lot too; maybe more than you. I know how much he thinks of you, and if he has taken this stand you can be sure he has a strong reason for it and that it has caused him pain. We don't know his reason but we do know that he is good and just and very kind, and that he never would be so indignant without cause. My boy, there is a third factor somewhere in this matter, and both you and Father Boone are suffering for it."

"That's what Dick and Ned said, mother," replied Frank, "but for the life of me I can't figure it out."

"It may be," she answered, "he takes the fight so seriously because you're an officer of the Club—and the highest one."

"But, mother, he doesn't know yet who was in the fight. No one has told him, and he never pumps the fellows. All he knows is that there was a fight, and I don't know how he got that. Maybe someone heard the racket and told him."

"Perhaps that is just it, and whoever told him may have exaggerated the affair, and Father Boone feels hurt that such a serious matter did not reach him by the right way. You see, dear, Father Boone is very honorable himself, and he expects his boys to be very careful of honor. That might be the explanation, although I still believe there is something more to it."

After a pause, Mrs. Mulvy continued, "And then, Father Boone might feel hurt at what I have referred to, but he would never punish the whole Club for a thing like that. It's all a mystery, I must admit, no matter which way I turn. I have been thinking considerably over it since the first night you spoke to me, and I cannot make head or tail of it. Except this, that I am certain there is something you and I do not see about it."

"I guess you are right, mother. But what do you advise me to do?"

"That is just it," she replied, "I don't know what to do. If he were not a priest, I would go to him for an explanation right away, but I know that he knows his business and is fair. So I guess it is better to leave it in his hands."

"O mother, I am so glad you said that. I

was afraid you'd go down to see him, and then I'd get 'kidded' by the fellows. They would say that I had to get my mother to fight my battles. I was going to make you promise that you would keep out of this thing, but now I don't have to. You are the good little mother."

"But," she interrupted, "I am going to ask you for a promise. No matter what happens, and no matter what the other boys do, you won't ever do anything or say anything disrespectful to Father Boone, or about him?"

"O, that's easy, mother. I had made up my mind that that was one thing I couldn't do—anything that would reflect on him."

She kissed him proudly, and a big load was lifted from his heart. Nothing would matter now. His mother was with him. He could stand anything with her back of him. He withdrew to his bedroom and knelt down before his little altar to offer the sufferings of the day as a sacrifice to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. "Sweet Jesus, I have suffered much today. Take my sufferings as penance for my sins and as thanksgiving for bestowing on me such a good mother, and give me strength to bear everything rather than offend Thee." He arose light-hearted.

A few moments later his mother heard him humming a hymn to the Blessed Virgin:

"Mother dear, O pray for me,
When far from heaven and thee
I wander in a fragile bark
O'er life's tempestuous sea."

"He is all right now," reflected Mrs. Mulvy as she went to her room smiling.

(III)

After his soliloquy, Father Boone went to the rectory in a firm frame of mind. When he got there, he found Mrs. Daly waiting for him. She came, she said, to ask his advice about Willie and his father. The father came home drunk nearly every night, and in such a condition, that Willie could not only defend himself, but could also injure his father. Tonight, she went on to relate, they had an awful time. She had to interfere to prevent serious harm to one or both.

"Only for Willie being so good to his mother I would not dare rush in between them. But I know that no matter what happens, he would never hurt me. So tonight I threw myself right between them, and separated them. Father, I am getting tired of this life.

It's not Christian. I was brought up well, and though you mightn't think it, I know the difference. So I came to see you to ask your advice. Should I put him away again? It did no good last time. He came out every bit as bad as before, and worse. Now what am I to do?"

The priest listened sympathetically, and when she paused, he asked, "Is he home now?"

"He is, your Reverence."

"Well, I'll go over and see him."

He showed her to the door, told her to say nothing to her husband, and promised he would be over inside an hour. Some thirty or forty minutes later he was poking his way up the dingy and dirty stairs to the Daly flat. Bill was out. No doubt the home had few attractions for him. Mr. Daly had been pretty badly shaken up by the encounter with his son, and sat fairly sobered on the edge of the bed. The priest entered, made a sign to Mrs. Daly to withdraw, and crossing the room, sat down alongside Daly.

"Well, Michael," he began, "I have come over to see you because I know you need a friend. You know I married you, Michael, and baptized Willie. You were a fine man

then, none better, and you and the Missus were very proud of the baby. Well, Michael, you have got clean off the track—and it does not pay, does it, Michael? You had your nice little home and a tender wife, and a boy you were proud of. And all that is gone now, Michael. And pretty soon you'll be gone, too. It does not pay, does it? For the bit of pleasure you get from the liquor, see the price you have paid. It was not the ten cents nor the quarter you put over the bar, but it is this ruined home, Michael Daly. It is a slave and a sloven you have made of your wife, and it is driving the boy to the police, you are doing. Now, in God's Name, Michael, stop it. It is not too late. I will help you, and the wife will help you and Willie will help you. I know you had a fight with him just now, but that is past. It was the liquor did it. Tell me, Michael, you will be a man and cut the stuff out?"

Tears were forming in the man's eyes as the priest looked at his upturned face.

"I'm a beast and no man," he moaned, "I'm down and out. I'm a curse to myself and my own. I'm not worth your bothering about me. Let me alone. Let Mike Daly go his way, he's

done for. The devil of whisky has got him and he'll get him for good some day."

"Mike Daly," said the priest firmly, "you are down, God knows, but you are not out. And you are not going to be."

"That's all very well. It's that easy to say, but you don't know the grip that this devil has on me. I've tried and tried and tried, only to fall back again into the gutter. I tell you it's all up with me."

"If it is up with you, it is because you want it to be so," said the priest. "But I tell you, Mike Daly, you are on the brink of hell and the only thing that keeps you from falling into it, is the slender barrier of life. Do you realize that you may be called out of life to judgment any moment without warning? My God! man, where is your faith? If you break the law of the government, you know what would happen! And is not God's law more sacred? Do you suppose you can trifle with the Almighty? Because God does not punish you on the spot, do you think you can ignore Him?"

By this time Daly was quite himself. He had never had such a talking to. The words went right into his soul. He knew about

punishment for a man if he breaks the law of the country. And it surely was true that God's law is more serious. That hit him hard. The priest saw that the man was wavering, and he continued:

"Now, Michael, I'll tell you what we will do. But first I shall ask you an honest question, man to man. Do you want to get away from the vile stuff?"

"I do," fairly roared Daly.

"Good," said the priest, "that's half the battle. Now, I want you to know that I am the best friend you've got on earth outside your own family. I shall ask you to do nothing but what is for your own good. Will you trust me?"

"I will, so help me God!" he shouted.

"And it is God who is going to help you," said the priest. "You are going to be a man again, Mike Daly. I guarantee that. *Do . . . you . . . understand . . . that?*" said the priest slowly and firmly.

"I do," answered the now aroused and interested man.

"Then listen: You are just a 'bum' now—a low down, bar-room 'bum.' Nobody wants you around. You can't get a job anywhere. I

am going to get you a good job. You won't go back on the priest if he gives his word for you?"

"So help me! No," cried Mike.

"Now, another thing," said the priest. "When you went to church every Sunday, and received Holy Communion once a month, you were a good God-fearing man. That's where we begin. You make a friend of God first of all. It's hard enough to go through life right with God and with His help, but it is impossible without it. It's years since you have been to church, and the Sacraments, and you know these have been the most unhappy years of your life."

Just then Bill entered. He was surprised to see the priest talking to his father. Immediately he supposed that he had come to complain about the breakage and mischief at the Club. But he was set right almost immediately.

"William," said the priest, kindly and proudly, "come over here and shake hands with your father."

The boy hesitated.

Again the priest spoke: "William, come and take the hand of a man that is never

going to touch liquor in his life again. Your father is a new man."

"O father, father!" cried Bill, as he rushed across the room.

No words. Tears of the father and son as the two embraced.

The priest, meanwhile, had gone into the kitchen to tell the good news to Mrs. Daly. She rushed in to find the father and son weeping over each other.

"O Michael, Michael," she shouted, "I knew the Blessed Mother would never let you go to the end as you were!" And she fairly fell on them both.

The priest withdrew, and would have left altogether, but that he had not finished his work. After a while, he came into the room and said, "All three of you kneel down." They got on their knees. "May God Almighty, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, bless you."

"Amen" responded the three.

"And may the Blessed Mother help and protect you."

"Amen" again came the response.

They arose. It was a transfiguration. Determination and pride on Daly's face, love on Mrs. Daly's, and gladness on the boy's.

"Now, Michael, I want you to go to confession next Saturday night and receive Holy Communion on Sunday," said the priest. "You do your part, and God will do His. You have given Him no opportunity to help you these past years. You have kept away from Him, your best Friend and Helper."

"Never again," said Daly, firmly.

"Straighten up now," said the priest, "and come to see me Monday morning. I'll have a job for you by that time. Here's a few dollars to get some clothes. You can pay me back when you have it to spare. Good-bye."

For sometime after the priest went away, they spoke not a word. They could not, for something seemed to lodge in their throats. When Mrs. Daly found that she could use her voice, she went to a little box on the bureau, kept carefully in the midst of all the confusion, and taking out her rosary of the Blessed Virgin, she went over to her husband and son and said, "And now let us thank her." They knelt down, said the beads and finished with the prayer:

"Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope; to thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee

do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary."

There is joy even in heaven over a sinner that doth penance.

(IV)

The effects of Father Boone's visit at the Daly home began to show at once; the father, mother and son were transformed. Michael Daly spoke of it first. "I've not had a day's luck since I've been away from the Church, and I'm going to get back."

"O Blessed Mother, do you hear him?" exclaimed Mrs. Daly. "Holy Mary, pray for us sinners now."

"I've had my last drink, so help me!" continued Daly. "I've said it often before, and gone back to the dirty stuff. But something new has come into my life. Father Boone's words burned right into my soul. And every word he said was true, so help me!"

All the while, Bill was wondering. Could it be real? It all seemed so new to him. For eight years he had heard nothing but blas-

phemy and abuse from his father, and here he was now, talking and acting like a man. Was it a reality? He could hardly believe his senses. But there was his father arm and arm with his mother. That certainly was real. It was years since he had seen anything like that before. The sight, so unusual, began to overpower him. He ran to his father and cried out, "O Dad, Dad, Dad!"

For a moment he could say no more.

"It's all right, Willie boy," said his father. "Dad's all right, and he's going to stay so."

It is true that Willie had become more or less a "tough." His environment had hardened him. He had had to fight his way along. But one thing always stood by him, his affection for his mother. Something else also was a big factor in keeping him from going altogether bad. He never failed to say his morning and evening prayers. His early training under the good Sisters at the parochial school served as an anchor to hold him to his religion. The prayers he had learned there, the pious mottoes on the walls, the example of the Sisters, all had made a strong impression on his young mind although his conduct often failed to show it.

He remembered also some of the incidents they had related. One in particular never left his mind. In consequence of it, he had resolved never to say an immodest word or do an unclean deed. No boy ever heard an impure word from Bill, no matter how rough he might be. He would fight, yes. He would swagger and bluster. But he could never forget the promise he had made one day in church, before the altar of the Blessed Virgin, that he would never say anything to make her blush. And so far he never had, although he had often been with companions whose conversation and conduct would bring the crimson to any decent face.

He had from his faith a realization of the presence of God in the world. He remembered a large frame in the class room wherein was the picture of a triangle. In the center was an Eye. It seemed to be looking right at him, no matter where he was, and under it was written, "The All-Seeing Eye of God." The Sister one day had said to the boys that they should always live in such a way that they should be glad God was looking at them. That made a great impression on him. Of course, he often forgot the Eye. But on one

occasion, when he was strongly tempted to steal, and the two boys with him did steal, he saw that Eye, and remained honest. The day after, the two fellows were caught and sent to the reformatory for a year. The Eye of God meant even more to him after that.

On another occasion, he could have received an afternoon off by lying, as did several of his companions. But the Eye was looking at him, and he would not tell the lie. It is true, there was many a slip, for poor Bill was only human and a boy. And after all, religion does not suppose we are all saints. Its purpose is to make us such. It has hard work on some material. But no substance is too hard for it, if only it has half a chance. Bill, although a 'bad nut' as many called him, was not so bad as he might have been. If it were not for his religion, poorly as he practised it, he would have gone to the bad utterly. So Bill now stood facing a new thing in his life. His father was turning in a new direction. Would he keep on in it, or fall back, as so often before?

There was something different about this event, Bill felt. He had never seen that peculiar and stern look in his father's eyes

before. And he remembered that the Sisters had often told them how God would help us do things that we could not do ourselves if we truly turned to Him. It did seem as though his father had truly turned to God. Bill also remembered how every day the Sister had had the whole class say one "Hail Mary" for those who were in temptation.

He went to his bedroom, closed the door, took out an old prayer book and, opening it to a picture of the Mother of God, he prayed earnestly, finishing with "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners *now* and at the hour of our death, Amen." Then he added, "Blessed Mother of God, strengthen my poor father and make him good and sober."

Bill reflected that Father Boone had once told the boys that if they wanted anything of God or of the Saints, they should add sacrifices to their petitions. "Blessed Mother, in thy honor and for my father's reform, I will leave off smoking until I am twenty-one." He arose renewed and light-hearted.

All next day he revolved in his mind the scurvy trick he had done at the Club. He knew the pride Father Boone took in having

things nice there. In reality it was the priest who had suffered by his wreckage, he reflected, not the boys. Sure, they had suffered, too. The McCormack treat had been called off. That was a mean trick. He had "queered" the crowd to get square on one or two. And after all, what had he to square? Mulvy had fought him straight.

The more he thought on it, the more Bill felt ashamed of himself. By night he had fully made up his mind to go over to the Club, make a clean breast of it all, and take the consequences. "And I'll offer that up too," said he, "for Dad."

(V)

At the Club the next evening, all the fellows were talking matters over. Father Boone was upstairs in his office. He had said to himself a dozen times, "I must keep a hold on that boy Daly. He is a diamond in the rough. I'd like to know how many of these fellows downstairs would be much better if they went through what he has experienced. I must see to it that he gets a fair show. The fellows are down on him. Maybe they have had cause, but they've got

to help me give the fellow his chance. Another reason for getting at the heart of this affair without any more delay—a boy's soul and his welfare are at stake."

The boys below were pretty glum. Things were not the same. A shadow was over the place. When Frank came in, however, his face was so placid that at first they thought he had adjusted matters.

"Well, old man, what's the good news?"

"Nothing yet, fellows, but I guess it'll come out all right."

Just then the door opened, and in walked Daly. For a few seconds no one said a word. They just looked at him in astonishment.

Daly's walk to the Club had been hard going. The nearer he got to it, the more he hesitated. What would Father Boone say? Facing the boys was one thing—he could fight down his mean deed, but how about Father Boone and his interest in his father—and the job he was going to get him? Would this revelation knock that all to pieces? How could Father Boone trust a man whose boy broke into a house and smashed things up?

All this stood out boldly before Bill. So did

the Eye of God. "He sees, and I'll go ahead and trust in Him," he concluded. And so he went up the steps leading to the Club door, passed timidly along the hallway and opened the door, where the boys were discussing the committee affair. As he stood in the doorway, silence held the crowd. After a moment, indignation broke loose. It showed itself first in looks of contempt, then in moving away from him.

"That's all right fellows, I'm the goat, and I deserve to be."

They thought he was sarcastic. But the words came from his very soul.

Mistaking him, they flung back cutting remarks: "You're a Billy Goat, all right," came from one quarter.

"So you've changed from a Bull to a Goat" greeted him from another side.

For a few seconds Bill felt like rushing in and striking right and left. But he checked himself. It was a violent effort and showed on his countenance.

"It's a nice fix you've got us in," shouted Tommy Hefnan.

Of course that meant to Bill that they knew the whole story of the damaged room.

"Fellows," he exclaimed, "I did a mean trick and I'm willing to take my medicine." The boys saw in this only a reference to the fight.

"That's all right, Bill," exclaimed Frank. "It was my fault as much as yours. We shook hands on it when it was over, and as far as I'm concerned, it's ended." Then turning to the crowd he said, "I say, fellows, let's call it square," to which they more or less willingly agreed.

Bill now felt that he was small compared with his late opponent. He saw Frank do by a word what he himself could not do by words or blows. He waited until he got the opportunity, and then gave Frank a signal that he had something to say. Frank stepped aside.

"I want to make myself right with the 'bunch'," Bill told him. "I came over for that. But if I start to speak, they'll 'ride' me. You can help me. I got to say, Mulvy, that you're a far better fellow than I am, in every way. I was a skunk to bring on that fight. And I was worse than a skunk in doing what I did afterwards. But I'll be hanged if I'm going to stay one. I'll take all that's coming to me and square myself. You know what I mean?"

He paused for a reply, but Frank's ideas were in too much confusion to permit a ready answer. This was strong language to apply to a mere fight. It suggested that there was truth in the surmise of Ned Mullen, that there was more than the fight to account for the unusual stand taken by Father Boone in the affair.

Bill cleared his throat nervously, to continue, when the clang of fire bells sounded, and the rushing of the fire engines and trucks along the street brought the boys in a stampede to the door and the street windows. Frank and Bill were carried along with the others.

(VI)

Ordinarily, the passing of a fire engine engaged the crowd's attention but a few moments. The dashing engine and hose-cart always made a good spectacle. But now as the Club boys looked along the street, they saw not only smoke but flames. And they heard screams. All the fellows rushed out and followed the engine to the place where the police were roping off the fire line. The hook-and-ladder came along at a tearing

pace. The firemen jumped from the truck, hoisted up the long, frail-looking ladder, and threw it against the cornice of the roof.

The shock somehow unhitched a connection at the last extension. The ladder hung suspended by only a light piece of the frame. In the window right under the ladder was a woman, and a child of four or five years. The firemen felt that if they brought the ladder back to an upright position, the last extension would break and they would not be able to reach the window. On the other hand, the ladder, as it stood, could not sustain a man's weight. A minute seemed an hour.

One of the firemen started to take the chance and run up. His foreman pulled him back. "It's sure death, Jim," he shouted. "That ladder won't hold you. You'd drop before you could reach them."

The foreman was right. The men were willing enough but there was no chance of reaching the top, or halfway to it.

Now Father Boone came running up. On learning that lives were in danger he had hastened to the Church, gotten the holy oils, and hurried over to be of service, if occasion required.

The cries of the woman and child were piercing and heart-rending. The life nets were spread and the men shouted to them to jump. But they were paralyzed with fear. One of the firemen was heard to exclaim, "I wish I weighed a hundred pounds less, I'd risk that ladder."

Bill Daly, in the forefront of the crowd, heard him. Two lives at stake! He weighed a hundred pounds less than that man. And, as he hesitated, a great fear clutching at his heart, his mind was filled with a medley of thoughts, in which mingled the idea of sacrifice for his father's reform, the Eye of God, his own worthlessness, his confession not yet made, and the glory of heroic deeds. Again a terrible, piercing cry from above. Without a second's waiting, without warning, before the firemen knew it, he had rushed under the rope, over to the truck, and like a cat, was on his way up the ladder.

Bill had often seen the firemen couple the ladders in the station near his home. He knew if he got there in time he could put the detached parts together. Up he went, hands and feet, as fast as he could move. The ladder swayed. The men yelled to him to come back.

He evidently heard nothing and saw nothing but that dangling extension, which was all that separated him from death. Without slowing up a bit, he reached the uncoupled extension, fastened it, and made the ladder secure. Hardly had it fallen into place, when several firemen were on their way up. The thing was done.

The excitement of it over, Bill suddenly realized that he was high up in the air. The climbing of the firemen made the ladder sway. Before anyone realized what was happening, Bill lost his balance, tottered, fell over completely, and went headlong down. The men below holding the life net under the window, saw him totter and changed their position as fast as possible in order to get under him. But he fell so suddenly that they hardly had time to shift. They had scarcely got into position, when down he came into the net, before it had tightened up. The fall was considerably broken, but he landed hard enough to make the thud distinctly heard. And there he lay in a heap, limp. He was unconscious. They lifted him out, carried him over to the Club room, and sent for a doctor.

Meanwhile, Father Boone, who had been the first to reach him, hastily anointed him and gave him conditional absolution. He was about to return to the fire to be on hand in case others were injured, but one of the firemen came in just then and said that the woman and child were rescued, and that the fire was under control.

So the priest sat beside Bill, holding his hand, and patting his forehead. Instead of a doctor, an ambulance arrived. Bill was carried on a stretcher into the wagon, and with a warning clang, it was off for the hospital. The doctor was on one side of him, the priest on the other. Neither spoke. Both kept their eyes on the patient. The doctor held his pulse, and moved his eyelids to observe the extent of the danger. A hasty examination at the hospital emergency room showed a badly injured arm and side, and a bruised, but not fractured, skull.

(VII)

Having been assured that the case was not fatal, Father Boone boarded a trolley and soon found himself near the Daly tenement. He was used to errands like this. And yet

this had something different about it. Often had he carried sad news to wives and mothers and fathers. But there was an element of tragedy in this case. Only the day before, he had left the Dalys starting out on a new way, father, mother and son. And now the link that bound father and mother, if not broken, was very close to it. Would the news start Mike Daly drinking? Would it harden him, or would he see in it the hand of God?

With these thoughts in his mind, he rapped gently at the door. Mrs. Daly met him all radiant. A wonderful change had occurred. The room was neat and clean, she herself was as tidy as a pin and in walked Daly himself, greatly improved by a clean shave and a clean collar. "I want to see both of you together," he said. "I have a bit of good news for you."

They walked into the front room. It was really decent now. The home as well as the occupants had undergone a change.

"Mr. and Mrs. Daly," began the priest, "I want to congratulate you. You have a boy to be proud of. You have someone to live for. Willie is a hero. He has just saved two lives at a fire."

At the word fire, and at not seeing their boy along with the priest, a certain apprehension seized them both. Neither spoke for a moment, and then Daly said, "And where is the boy?"

"He is all right," answered the priest. "He got a few scratches and bruises, but it is nothing much. He is a real hero, and all the boys are talking about him. I just thought I'd be the first to bring you the news."

"Tell us about it, Father dear," exclaimed Mrs. Daly.

The priest now felt that the worst part of his task was over. In a reassuring tone he narrated all that had happened. He made up his mind to tell everything just as it was, because he felt it was better for them to get it from him and with him near, than in any other way.

When he got to the fall from the ladder, the mother screamed and fell back in her chair. The priest was not unprepared for this. He dashed cold water into her face, and soon she came to, moaning and uttering pious ejaculations for her son. By the time the priest was ready to leave, both father and mother were composed and resigned.

"You should thank God, both of you," said Father Boone to them, "that He has left you your boy. It is a lesson to all of us to live in such a way as to be always ready to meet God whenever He calls us out of life. Now you, Michael, no matter what happens, don't you ever think that the liquor will drown your sorrow. I'd rather see Willie a corpse than to see you drunk again."

"And so would I myself, so help me!" exclaimed Michael.

The priest nodded, satisfied that now Michael was out of the pit. He gave them the hospital address, and advised them not to go before the next day, unless they received a message. No news, he assured them, was good news.

No news might be good news, but not for a mother. Hardly had the door closed when Mrs. Daly put on her things and made ready to start for the hospital.

The priest had a good deal to think about. There was a possibility that Willie's condition was serious on account of internal injuries. What a blow it would be to the parents if he should die! When he reached home, the first thing he did was to telephone

to the hospital and inquire about the boy. He was informed that the patient was resting quietly. "That is good," he said to himself, "for I should not be at all surprised if Mrs. Daly ran down to see the lad tonight." With that he went over to the Club, wrote a few letters, and then returned to the rectory for the night.

(VIII)

The boys were late leaving the Club after the excitement of the fire. They spoke in suppressed tones. Admiration and regret prevailed—admiration for Bill's daring deed—regret for their conduct to him just before.

"Gee!" said Tommy, "I'm sorry I sailed into him the way I did."

"And who would have thought he was such a daring chap!" exclaimed Dick.

"It only shows," added Ned, "that you never can tell what's in a fellow."

"We called him the 'Bull'," said Frank, "and in one way we were right, for that was the bulliest thing I ever saw. My hat is off to Bill Daly."

After a while, they turned to speculating on his condition.

"I hope it's nothing serious," remarked Dick.

"Suppose we wait until Father Boone comes back," added Tommy. "He'll tell us exactly what's the matter."

After it had got to be late, Frank observed, "I'll bet he's waiting for Bill to regain consciousness, and there's no telling when he'll be back. Let's wait a quarter of an hour more, and then if he's not here, we'd better go."

They all assented to this and when the time was up, they started to leave. Frank, however, signalled to Dick and Ned and Tommy, and they loitered about until the rest had gone.

"Fellows," began Frank, "I had a letter all written to Father Boone about the scrape we're in, but I tore it up, I'm surer than ever that something worse has happened than that fight. I don't even believe that Father Boone knows who was in it. But that scrap was the basis of something else, something really serious. Bill Daly knows what it was, believe me. He came here tonight to straighten things out. Did you see how he came in, and how he stood the 'gaff'? Would he have taken all

that from kids like you unless he had something big troubling him? And that's not all. He got me aside and began to talk confidentially, hinting at something dark, you know. He was just getting ready to accuse himself when the fire engine came along, and you know the rest."

The three others nodded in agreement with Frank and awaited further light on the matter.

"That's all," he continued, "except that I never saw such an exalted look on any boy's face as when he leaped for that ladder. It just seemed to say 'I know you've got me down bad, boys, but here goes to show you that there is some good left in Bill Daly.'"

In point of fact, Bill had never given the boys a thought when he made his plunge for the ladder. But the look of exaltation, as Frank called it, was there nevertheless. Its source was higher than Frank gave him credit for.

"Now I maintain," asserted Frank, "that the fellow was glad of the chance to set himself right with the Club. And from what he hinted at, I'm certain, too, that he did something to 'queer' us with Father Boone,

something pretty bad, too, for I never before knew Father Boone to take such measures as he has in this affair."

"You're a regular Sherlock Holmes, old man," observed Dick.

"Sherlock Holmes or not," said Frank, "you'll find out before this thing is settled that I'm right. A man like Father Boone does not change his character over night. Something has happened to make him take this attitude, and I'd give my hat to know what it is."

Frank's hat may not have been worth much, but it seemed to be the limit of his disposable property—to judge by the extreme earnestness with which he risked it. At all events the boys felt that Frank was keenly convinced of his position, and as he was always careful about his conclusions, they were inclined to agree with him.

(IX)

In this frame of mind the chums parted. The others went directly home. Frank made some excuse for loitering and as soon as they were gone, took his way in the direction of the hospital. It was fully ten o'clock, and

the hospital was nearly a mile off. He had to walk, but by a combination of brisk walking and occasional sprints, he got to the place in short time.

Everything was quiet about the immense building. In the main vestibule Frank found a matter-of-fact, middle-aged man standing behind a desk, over which was a sign—"Bureau of Information." Several people were seated on a long bench nearby, waiting to be conducted to friends or relatives who were patients, or to get word of their condition.

Frank approached the desk timidly, and said to the clerk, "May I ask, sir, how William Daly is?"

At the words 'William Daly,' there was a scream and a flutter from the bench, and in a moment a woman stood before Frank and put her arms about him, crying as she did so, "Do you know my Willie? Are you one of Father Boone's boys?" Without waiting for an answer, she went on, with sobs and exclamations, to give a fond mother's estimate of the best boy in the world.

As Mrs. Daly told of her Willie's affection for her, she broke down completely. The clerk summoned a nurse. Mrs. Daly was

taken into a side room, and under the firm but kind management of the nurse, she soon calmed down. Frank, although so tender-hearted, was not an expert at giving sympathy. Indeed, it was good that he was not, for in Mrs. Daly's hysterical condition, sympathy would have made her worse. The excitement was hardly over when word came from the office that William had regained consciousness, and that he was out of danger. The messenger also added that he was sleeping quietly, and that it was not advisable to disturb him now, but that his mother would be welcome to see him in the morning.

Mrs. Daly turned to Frank. "You are one of Willie's friends?"

Frank reflected on the fight and the contemptuous terms that Bill had used toward him, but he also remembered their final talk, and so replied without hesitation, "Yes, Mrs. Daly."

"Oh, he was the good boy to his mother! And it's a hard time of it he's had, with no one knowing how much the poor boy went through to help his mother. O Blessed Mother of God, help him from your place in heaven!"

Frank was affected by the emotion which was again overcoming the fond mother, but he said as calmly as he could, "Don't you think we had better go home now, Mrs. Daly?"

"No, I can't go home and him up there," she replied.

"But you can't stay here all night," objected Frank. "Come home with me now. That's what Bill would want if he had the say."

"Is that what you call him—Bill?"

"O, for short you know, Mrs. Daly. Boys always take short cuts."

"I never called him anything but Willie," she sighed and started to cry again.

"Won't you come home now?" Frank asked tenderly.

"I've got no heart to go anywhere while he is up there," she again declared.

Frank now realized that things were getting serious. His own mother would be anxious about him, and the hospital bench was not a place for Mrs. Daly to spend the night. He tried all his persuasive powers, to no effect.

While he was in this state of anxiety, he heard a voice at the desk ask, "Is William Daly doing nicely? Has he regained con-

sciousness yet?" Looking up, Frank, to his great joy, saw Father Boone. At the same instant, hearing a sob and looking in its direction, the priest perceived Mrs. Daly and Frank. He stepped over to where they were.

"Good gracious, my dear woman," he exclaimed, "this is no place for you at this hour. And you, Frank? I must say I am glad to see you here, but we must all go home now. Wait for me a minute. I'll just run upstairs and see William." As a priest, he had access to the wards at any hour of the day or night. It occurred to him that the patient might be conscious by that time, and he decided to see him and hear his confession if possible. He was conducted to Daly's bed, and saw that he was sleeping soundly. He knew that sleep was the best medicine; so he left the patient, after giving him his blessing.

"He is sleeping like a baby, Mrs. Daly," was the way he saluted the mother, as he drew near. Then, waiting for neither *yes* nor *no*, he took it for granted that they were all going home. Under his dominant and kindly manner, Mrs. Daly was like a child. Father Boone called a cab and gave the driver the

order to take both Mrs. Daly and Frank to their homes. He put a bill in Frank's hand to pay the fares, and without waiting for thanks or protestations, closed the taxi door, and walked briskly homeward.

Father Boone felt, after the crowded events and impressions of the day, that he needed the walk back to the rectory to clear his head. "I was right," he declared to himself, "Mulvy is all gold. The consideration of that boy! I've gone wrong somewhere! Frank's too tender-hearted to cause me pain, deliberately, and he is too brave to shirk responsibilty—to fail in the discharge of his duty. Deductions do not avail against known characteristics. A boy of Mulvy's character doesn't do a cowardly thing. I know that—evidence or no evidence. And yet—that plagued mystery keeps staring me in the face! If they had told me they'd had a free-for-all! I can make allowances. I know boys. Here it's nearly a week, and not one word in regard to the affair. And they know I am all cut up over it.

"What's up anyway? Why didn't I send for Mulvy after the first day and demand a report or explanation? Pride, I suppose;

hurt, at their lack of confidence in me. Well, the only thing is to get down from my high horse now. I've got to begin with myself.

"And yet," his thoughts swung around, "I don't know as it is pride exactly. There's the fitness of things—just indignation. Our Lord himself had to show it to the Scribes and Pharisees. I want those boys to know they're not acting right. That's my real motive." He sighed deeply. "Here I am again between post and pillar. I don't know what to do. I want to take the stand that will be of true benefit to the boys, not merely now but later."

So reflecting, he reached the rectory. A few minutes later, the light in his room was out and he had finished a busy and painful day.

Meanwhile, Frank saw Mrs. Daly home, and in a little while he was dismissing the chauffeur at his own door. Quickly he ran up the steps of his apartment house and in a moment had climbed the three flights of stairs. Everybody was in bed but his mother. Her first words were, "O my boy, what has happened to you? I was alarmed at your staying out so late."

Frank felt he should at least give some account of himself at once. In the most matter of fact way, he narrated the evening's events. But his mother discerned his generous heart beneath his words, and she was proud of him—so brave and so tender. And especially was she glad that Father Boone had found Frank at the hospital with Mrs. Daly. She knew how that would affect the misunderstanding, and she was more than satisfied with the turn of affairs when Frank finished his recital by saying, "I tell you, mother, Father Boone is a brick." Then, as he feared that this did not convey a great deal of meaning to her, he added, "He is 'some' man."

"And somebody is 'some' boy," echoed his mother, kissing him good-night.

Frank went to his room, said his prayers and jumped into bed. "I'll sleep until noon", he muttered, as he got under the covers. He closed his eyes, but although he was dead tired, he could not sleep. Indeed, it seemed he was more wide awake than at midday. The clock struck twelve, and still his mind was all activity.

He saw himself chatting with Daly—heard

the fire-clang—saw Bill run up the ladder—beheld him waver, totter and fall—saw his limp body in the net—heard the afflicted mother speak of her Willie—her good boy Willie, whom the boys called "Bull". And then there was Father Boone, always in the right place, and doing the proper thing, cool, firm, kind, commanding. And this was the man he was on the outs with. Was it more likely that a boy like himself would be wrong or Father Boone?

"I'm a boob," he accused himself. "I should have gone to him at the start. Even if he were cross—most likely he'd heard there was a row, and I was in it. Then, of course, he'd feel hurt that I hadn't shown him more confidence. But great guns! I did go up to make a clean breast of it, and got 'cold feet'. But that's not his fault. That's how the whole blame thing began. Gosh, I wish I had some of Bill Daly's sand!"

He had begun to feel a little drowsy. The clock struck one and he was murmuring "a little . . . of . . . Bill . . . Daly's . . . 'sand' . . . Bill . . . Daly's . . . sand . . . sand . . . . sand . . . . . sand!" And off he fell into the land of nod.

Chapter III

Comrades

It was full daylight when Bill Daly opened his eyes the next morning. On all sides of him were beds. Nurses and doctors were walking noiselessly up and down the ward. He did not know what to make of it. He had never been in a hospital before, even as a visitor. He had to make an effort to collect his thoughts.

O yes! the fire. That shaky ladder. The woman and the child at the window crying for help. His quick ascent up the ladder. The adjustment—a sudden sensation of dizziness—and then! Yes, he must have fallen.

Just then he moved his arm a bit, and a moan issued from his distorted mouth. He knew now—who he was and what had happened. He changed the position of his head and a groan escaped him. He moved his body ever so little, and pain shot all through it.

"Oh, Oh, Oh," he groaned. After that, for a moment, he lay as quiet as possible. "O, I'm a girl, all right," he told himself. "What am I groaning about? I'll bet Mulvy would take his medicine. That's 'some' boy, Mulvy. Never grunted once, and I hit him all over. O for a little of his 'sand.'"

Just then he moved his arm again, and another moan escaped him. A nurse, passing by, heard him.

"That's all right, little man," she said, "it's painful, but no broken bones; you'll be on your feet soon." Bill shut his jaw tight. His suffering recalled to his mind a story one of the Sisters had told the class a few years previously, of a little boy led into the Roman Amphitheatre to be tortured for the Faith. They made him hold burning coals in his hands and told him that if he dropped them he was giving incense to the idols. He held the coals until they burned right through his hand. A martyr. His picture was hanging on the wall of the class room. An angel was placing a crown on his head and he looked—happy!

"I've been a pretty tough nut," Bill soliloquized, "guess this is my punishment.

That martyr kid didn't do any harm. I've done a lot. The fellows aren't a bad set. They gave me a pretty good show. They didn't butt in on the fight. What grit that Mulvy has! I'd have given up, if he was on top—but not him! Gee—the way he just squirmed from under, and started in, as if only beginning. No wonder he plays football! A fellow's eyes tell you when you can't lick him. And cool as a cucumber! And then—'Let's shake!' 'Some boy' that Mulvy kid! And what a cur I was to go and smash things the way I did! And spoil the fellows having the McCormack treat. I'm pretty 'yellow'. And then Father Boone comes over and straightens things out and puts Dad on his feet!

"Well, I'm through with the rough-neck stuff. Pretty painful—but you don't catch me groaning again. I'll 'offer it up', like Sister said, for the love of God, to atone for my sins. I've got the sins all right. So here goes for the 'offer up' part. No more grunts, Bill Daly."

He had hardly finished his resolve to bear his pain patiently and without murmur, as an offering to God, when the doctor and nurse approached his bed.

"Well, sonny," began the doctor, "you did quite a circus stunt, I'm told."

Bill grinned for reply, as the doctor proceeded to examine him. It was necessary to press and probe and lift and handle him generally. Every pressure and every slightest movement caused him exquisite pain. But not a murmur escaped him. Once or twice there was an "Oh!" in spite of his best efforts, but not a complaint nor a whimper. Doctor and nurse were surprised. Finally, the doctor said, "Son, either you are not much hurt or you are the pluckiest lad I've ever examined."

"I don't know about the pluck, doctor," he replied, "but I do know that if I were hurt much more, it would be all over with me."

He had hardly finished the words when he fainted. When he came to, the doctor said, "Boy, nothing but dynamite can kill you, and I want to tell you that your name is pluck." They left him for a few minutes and when the nurse returned, she remarked: "You are not seriously injured, but you will be pretty sore for some days, and I want to tell you, you are a little hero."

When she was gone, Bill mused: "I wonder what she'd say to the 'little hero,' if she saw that damaged room and knew it was spite? I'm getting mine. I'll cut out the 'hero' stuff, for a while anyway."

About an hour later, as he was lying quietly on his back, he was delighted to see his mother coming towards him. The sudden movement he made, hurt him dreadfully but he quickly mastered himself, and gave no indication whatever of the pain he experienced. The nurse had given the mother strict orders not to touch him but, when she saw her Willie there before her, the great love she bore him made her forget everything. She threw her arms about him and before he could say a word, had given him a hug and a hearty kiss. It was almost as bad as the doctor's examination. Willie writhed in pain, but he uttered no complaint.

"O my dear, dear boy," exclaimed Mrs. Daly, seeing his efforts at suppressing the pain. "The nurse told me not to touch you, and here I've almost squeezed the life out of you, and made you suffer in every part of your body."

His suffering was so intense that it was

some minutes before Bill could reply to her. At length he said, "O mother, I'm so glad to see you. It seems so long since I left the house yesterday and, mother, life seems so different."

This exhausted him. He just lay still, his mother's hand on his forehead, and her eyes looking into his. In his weakened state, tears soon gathered, not of pain, but of gratefulness, of emotion from a high resolve to bury the old Bill Daly and to live anew.

By degrees they began to talk. She told him of the night before, and the meeting with the boy at the office below, and his kindness to her. Bill was all interest. She could not recall the boy's name and she was a poor hand at description. Bill mentioned a number of his corner chums. The Club boys did not even enter his head. "Think hard, mother, and see if you can't get it. I want to know. I didn't think anyone cared so much for me."

"O yes, now I remember," she replied, "When Father Boone came in he called him Frank."

That was too much for Bill. He thought of a thousand things all at once. His mother, only half understanding, continued: "He was

one of the nicest boys I ever saw. When we got to our house, he took me by the hand and says, 'Don't worry, Mrs. Daly. You've got one of the finest boys in the world, and he'll be home with you soon,' and his voice as kind and as tender as a woman's, God bless him!"

Bill was still thinking. This was the boy he had provoked to fight, the one who had had to take the brunt of the director's anger! Mrs. Daly was rambling on when Bill looked up and asked her if Father Boone had been around.

She was not a little surprised. "Didn't you know about him, dear?" she inquired. Then she proceeded to tell everything in detail, from the time that Father Boone brought her the news until he closed the taxi door and sent her home with Frank. The narration seemed to Bill like a story from a book. He had the illusion, again, of not being a party to the events at all, but just a spectator. Then the thought of his ingratitude came back full force. The kindly and tactful deeds of Father Boone bored into his soul like a red hot iron. What an ingrate he was. Hero! indeed. Such a hero!

While he was thus reflecting, the nurse

came over and informed his mother that it was time to go now, as the doctors would be in soon. Reluctantly she bade good-bye to her boy. Wiser by experience, she did not embrace him, but just bent low and kissed him gently on the forehead.

(II)

The doctors made their usual round of the ward, and when they came to Daly, the physician who had dressed his bruises the night before remarked, "Here's the hero kid." The head doctor looked at him kindly. "Well, little man," he said, "the next time you go to a fire, send us word so we can see you perform." They all laughed at this, and Bill smiled. After the examination, the doctor assured him, "Nothing the matter, my boy. You're sound as a dollar, just a little shaken up and bruised; and you'll be out in a few days."

When Mrs. Daly came in again about four o'clock in the afternoon, she was over-joyed to hear the good report of her son's condition. She saw now, however, that he was very serious. Indeed, it had been the most serious day of his life.

All day long Bill had been reflecting on what his mother had told him of Father Boone and of Frank. He had begun to realize that he had something to do besides being grateful to them both. There was a duty to perform. It had been hard to go to the Club when he intended to tell them about the breakage. And now it seemed ten times harder. How could he do it? After all the goodness shown him, to be obliged to admit that he was a thug. The thought had tortured him all the day. It was still racking his mind when his mother came in.

If only Father Boone would come around, he reflected. It would be easier to make a clean breast of it to him. He would understand. Father Boone seemed to understand everything. He'd see, too, that the Bill who had done the rough stuff was changed. He'd know without a lot of explaining, how some things hurt more than pain. The thing to do was to tell Father Boone and let it all rest with him.

That was Bill's conclusion and his resolve. He did not dare tell his mother. He wondered how much the boys knew. His mother, sitting admiringly at his side, told him one

piece of news which pleased him greatly. Father Boone had got his father a good job and he had started in right away. That was why he was not down with her to see him. But he would be around in the evening. While she was telling this, Bill interrupted her.

"O mother, see," he whispered, indicating two nuns who were coming toward them, "and one of them is Sister Mary Thomas."

They were Sisters from the school which Daly had attended before he went to work, and they greeted the mother and her boy sympathetically. After a bit, Mrs. Daly, recalled that her husband returning from work, would be waiting for his dinner, and she hurried away. The Sisters stayed for some time, giving Bill that comfort which they alone can impart. Before going Sister Mary Thomas placed a crucifix and a pair of beads in his hands. "He suffered for you, William," she said, "and you must also suffer for Him—now especially."

He watched them going out, as he might gaze on departing angels. Then his eyes were turned toward the crucifix. "He suffered in mind as well as body for me," he mused. For Bill was remembering many things now, which

he had not recalled since the Sisters had taught them to him in his school days. Calvary had a meaning for him now—an atonement for sin and a restoration to goodness. "Some job—to tell on myself," he sighed, "but I'll show the Lord that I mean business."

About seven o'clock in came Frank. Bill was both glad, and not glad, to see him. Everything Frank did for him only made matters harder for Bill. And yet he wanted that boy near him. Bill recognized the combination of strength and goodness in Frank. Indeed, one reason for the fight, had been his envy of Mulvy. But Bill's disposition had undergone a change. After what his mother had told him Frank appeared as a boy of nobler mould than the rest.

Frank began with an offhand, "Well, how goes it, old man?"

"Fine," answered Bill.

"You're all right, Bill. Your stock is pretty high now at the Club."

But Bill was thinking of other things than compliments, and after a moment's silence, Frank decided that the patient was suffering a good deal, and that he'd better go.

"No, don't go yet, Mulvy," Bill begged, "stay with a fellow a little while."

"Why, you are crying, old man," said Frank, as he looked into his face, "you must be suffering terribly. It takes a lot of pain to make you cry."

"It's not pain," he whispered. "It's something worse."

"O, I know, old fellow. You're thinking about your father and mother. But you're not seriously hurt, the nurse told me. Father Boone has been around to see your folks, and he has made them feel all right."

"It's something worse than that," answered Daly. "If I told you, you'd cut me dead, and so would the other fellows."

"Come now, old chap, you are not yourself. You've nothing to worry over. You're a guy that's got sand."

This had a reassuring effect on Bill. A doctor or a nurse might compliment him, but what do they know? But when a boy tells you you have "sand," that's different!

Frank was soon relating to him the fall into the net—the first account Daly had heard of it. Frank went on to tell about the ambulance and Father Boone, and the priest's visit to his

parents, and again how the priest came late at night and went up to see him, his kind words to his mother, and finally his sending her home in the taxi. It all seemed like a movie to Daly.

For some time he lay perfectly quiet. Then, although it cost him a deal of pain, he reached for Frank's hand and grasped it firmly. Their eyes met. Bill felt a great yearning to tell Frank everything. He had fully determined to tell only Father Boone. Even that would be hard. But now he really wanted to tell Frank. It would be such a relief!

While they were still grasping hands, he began, pausing after each sentence and speaking with an effort:

"Mulvy, I'm a cur . . . don't stop me . . . I'm worse . . . Let me go on . . . please . . . I've got to get this off my mind or bust . . . I'm bad, clean through, but from now on, never again . . . You've got a good home . . . You don't know what mine was . . . drunkenness, fights and the like . . . I've lived in the streets . . . nothing but roughnecks . . . became the worst of the lot . . . My Dad was sent to jail . . . Ma and me were in a bad way . . . no money for rent or food . . .

Somehow Father Boone turned up . . . helped us out . . . Then he got me a job . . . After that he put me in the Club . . . I didn't fit there . . . You know that . . . Something you don't know . . . I hated the bunch because they were decent . . . picked a fight with you . . . You licked me . . . yes you did . . . I had to clear out . . . But I was yellow and a thug . . . I fought underhand against you all . . . I did the meanest thing out."

At this point Frank tried to remonstrate with him, but at the same time he was keenly interested in what was coming.

"I hated the whole bunch and Father Boone and everybody. So when the crowd left, I sneaked back and broke a lot of chairs, overturned tables, tore down pictures, threw over the victrola, spilled ink on the floor. I knew it'd queer the crowd with Father Boone and spoil the McCormack treat. I got square . . . but . . . well, someone else has got square too. There are different kinds of pain, and my worst now is not my injuries."

There was a moment's silence. Frank was too much amazed to say a word. Bill continued: "I'm taking my medicine. If I'm not

the right sort the rest of my life, I hope to be cut and quartered. Look at Father Boone right afterwards helping my Dad . . . He'n' I had a terrible scrap. We'd have killed each other only for mother. Then she got Father Boone to come over. I don't know what he did—but—well, it was all different when I got back. Dad put out his hand to me. We knelt down. Said the 'Hail Holy Queen.' Father took the pledge. I felt like a whipped cur, all next day. I saw I'd have to square myself at any cost. That's why I came to the Club. You know the rest."

Here he paused, heaved a sigh, and exclaimed, "O God, what a relief."

Frank's feelings can be imagined. Here was the key to the mystery, and Father Boone justified. Apparently he had known all about the wreck—and it was natural to suppose that it was the work of a crowd. What a surprise to the director to see that damaged room! And worse—no explanation. It was all clear to Frank now. The fog was lifted. The missing parts of the picture fitted into place. But what of Father Boone?

After a brief silence, which seemed to both a very long while, Frank gave an extra squeeze

to Daly's hand and said, "It's all right, Bill, we'll stand together. You can count on me to the limit."

The look of gratitude in Daly's face told Frank that there was now a special bond between them.

"You have told me so much, old man," he said, "that I suppose you won't mind if I ask you a few questions?"

"All you want," replied Daly.

"Well, first of all, does Father Boone know anything about the affair?"

"Not as far as I know. I was intending to tell him that night of the fire, but you saw how it turned out. First I was going to tell the fellows, and then see Father Boone and squeal on myself to him."

"Daly—that was a dirty job . . . but it's past and done. You're no longer yellow. Only one in a million would come back as you're doing. We're chums, Bill Daly, through thick and thin."

"I like you for that, Mulvy, and I hope you'll never regret it. Here's something," he continued, timidly showing the crucifix in his other hand. "I've promised Him, never a crooked thing again,—and a promise to Him

means no going back." They joined hands—and hearts. They were comrades now. With a look which showed that the past was buried, Frank tenderly said,

"How's the pain, old man?"

"Well, since I've told you so much, I'll tell you a little more. It's something awful. I'm not doing any baby stunts,—but—just the same I've got an awful dose. While on the broad of my back, thinking, and in pain, I remembered that martyr boy the Sister told us about, who held the burning coals in his hands, and I said to myself, 'Bill Daly, that kid didn't have your score, but see what he endured for God.' And that's when I promised. I just told Him I deserved it all, I'd take it for penance, and I promised to cut out the cry-baby stuff."

"Daly, you're a brick."

To which Bill rejoined, "And Mulvy, you're all gold—twenty-two carat."

"You'll get over that, Daly," replied Frank. "I must be going now. Mum is the word. What you've told me, is the same as not said. I'll not breathe it to a living soul."

A tempest raged in Frank's soul. His was a magnanimous character, and it pained him to

think that circumstances should have framed for Father Boone, such a strong case against him. The director had placed absolute confidence in him. No wonder he showed such indignation. "And wasn't it just like Father Boone—to turn in a half dozen men and fix things up at once, and then wait for developments as if nothing had happened!"

Frank made his way toward the Club. "If I can get hold of the janitor," he thought, "I can find out all I want to know." He turned off to the street where the janitor lived, and soon found his man.

"Good evening, Mr. Dunn," he began.

"Good evening, sir."

In an apparently indifferent manner, Frank led up to his objective. But old Dunn suspected something right from the start. It is true that Father Boone had not imposed silence in regard to the mischief at the Club, but the janitor was a sensible and loyal man, and he judged that if Father Boone wanted anything to be said about the affair, he would say it himself. The indifference that Dunn displayed whenever Frank tried to lead up to the point, was amazing. The boy finally gave up the flank attack and tried the front.

"Mr. Dunn, that was quite a bit of damage we had over there the other day, wasn't it?"

"Quite a bit," said Dunn, "but I guess Daly was not hurt as badly as we thought at first."

"Oh, I don't refer to the fire, but to the Club," observed Frank.

"There was no fire at the Club, as far as I know," remarked Dunn.

"No, but there was a whole lot of breakage over there, and you know all about it. Now, how in the name of Sam Hill did they fix things up by the time we got there in the evening?"

"Young man, if you want to know anything about the Club, I think you'll find Father Boone in his office at his usual hours. And now good night!"

"By gum," muttered Frank, "the old snoozer's no fool. I'll bet if he had an education, he'd be on top somewhere."

Meanwhile, Father Boone was in the Club office attending to the little matters that came up daily. He was poring over a letter which had come in the afternoon mail. It was written on exceptionally fine paper, and was signed "James Roberts." The director in-

dulged in a moment's speculation. "Roberts, Roberts," he reflected. "New name to me. I wonder what he wants. I hope it's not a complaint," he sighed, as he turned back to the first page.

"Reverend Sir:

I trust you will pardon my addressing you without knowing your name. I am sending this letter to the head of the Boys' Club, as that is as definite as I can be for the moment. Later, I hope to call on you personally.

I have just returned from Cuba and found my family in the Hotel Plaza instead of at their home, where I left them. They have informed me of what you already know better than myself. It was my house that was on fire, and my wife and daughter attribute the saving of their lives to a boy of your Club, who hitched up the detached ladder, and in doing so, met with such a dreadful accident.

I've been home for only an hour, but my first duty, I consider, is to convey to you my gratitude and to inquire what I

can do for the boy. If you will let me know where he is, I shall have a trained nurse sent to care for him, and I shall consider it my privilege to do anything else that is possible.

I await your reply.

Gratefully,

James D. Roberts."

Father Boone never allowed his correspondence to accumulate. Every evening saw his desk cleared. No letter that called for a reply was left over for the next day, if he could possibly help it. He answered this letter even before he read the rest which were on the table before him.

"My dear Mr. Roberts:

I want to thank you for your letter. The boy is out of danger, and is getting the best of care at the Lawrence Hospital. I shall let him know of your kind inquiry, and of your wish to be of assistance to him.

With kindest regards,

Sincerely,

Jerome Boone, S.J."

"A good man to interest in Willie's family," he reflected, as he addressed the letter.

Father Boone was always planning how he could help people. Every time he made the acquaintance of anyone in a position of authority or influence, he seized the opportunity to remark:

"If you ever need a good bright boy, let me know, and I shall send you one with whom you will be satisfied."

In this way, he got many a boy placed in a good position. Often, too, he got jobs for their fathers. He was always so careful to recommend only the right sort, that a word from Father Boone was the best recommendation a man or boy could have in getting work.

Just as he finished his letter to Mr. Roberts, he heard a knock at his door, and a moment later, a bright little chap of about thirteen presented himself.

"Good evening, Vincent," said the priest. "What can I do for you?"

"Please, Father," began the lad, "my father is home from work three weeks now with rheumatism, and mother says would you give me a line to some place downtown to get a job?"

"Well, my little man, have you got your working papers?"

"Yes, Father, my mother went with me to the City Hall this morning and got them."

"It's too bad, Vinc., that a bright boy like you must give up school so soon. But I suppose your mother wouldn't do this unless she had to. I'll get you a place, and then we must see about your keeping up your studies at night school." He wrote a line or two, and addressing the envelope, gave it to the boy.

"Now, Vincent, I am sorry to do this, but you just make the best of it. I'm sending you to a very nice place with a good chance for advancement. The pay is not much, but you're only thirteen, and it's a fine start. Now that you are starting out, mark well what I say: Make yourself so useful that when there is a vacancy higher up, you will be the first boy they'll think about. And what you do, do pleasantly. Good-bye and God bless you. And," he added, as Vincent was going out the door, "let me know from time to time how you are doing."

The boy had gone but a few steps when, with a jerk, he wheeled round and returned.

"O Father, excuse me," he faltered, "I forgot to thank you."

"That's all right," said the priest. "The best way to thank me will be to let me hear a good report of you."

The priest's next thought was, "I must run down to the hospital, and see Willie. But he does not worry me so much just now as Frank does. I can't make out his conduct in regard to this Club mix-up. He is certainly an honorable boy and most considerate, and yet he has left me in the dark all this time. He knows that 'committees' are not my way of doing business. After last night, I'd like to drop the whole matter. But it is not an affair of sentiment. I must see it through for his sake, and for the sake of the rest also. If nothing develops before tomorrow night, I'll take the initiative myself. I hate that, and I'd much rather they'd do the right thing of their own accord. But,—" he shut down his desk, put on his hat and coat, and started for the hospital.

Frank, at the same time, was on his way from Dunn's to the Club. Once more he was going straight to the director,—to tell him now, that there must be a misunderstanding,

and that he was sorry to see him grieved. He saw the director's point of view—of course he couldn't explain—but perhaps Father Boone would understand that he wasn't really slipping so badly.

He was walking pretty fast, with his head down, his chin buried in his coat collar, and his hands deep in his pockets. Buried in his thoughts, he did not see Father Boone approaching on his way to the hospital. The priest was almost on top of him before he was aware of his presence. Looking up suddenly he tipped his hat and stammered—"Good evening, Father."

"Good evening, sir," answered the priest and hurried on.

Frank stopped. He was dumfounded. "Good evening, *sir! Sir*, is it? So it's '*sir*' now? Good evening, *sir*." He kept on repeating the phrase, indignation following his astonishment. He knew where the priest was going, and realized that the interview with him could not be held that evening. Another day of torture stood before him. He was about to give free rein to his feeling of injustice when he recollected again that the priest with the data he possessed was perfectly right in his

attitude. So, instead of going to the Club, he turned aside and went into the church. It was always open from five in the morning until ten at night. Going up to the altar of the Sacred Heart, he knelt down and prayed.

Long and earnestly he poured out his soul to God, ending with the words, "Accept, O Sacred Heart of Jesus, my sad heart as a sacrifice and bless my father and mother and Bill Daly and Father Boone."

So saying, he arose light-hearted and made his way into the street. He actually began to whistle, and when a boy whistles, he is all right with the world. He did not mind now how misunderstood he might be. It was no longer a load of lead that weighed him down. Rather, his sorrow had turned to gold. It was something that God esteemed. He had been able to give God something acceptable to Him, because it had cost him a good deal. That made him happy.

Father Boone was on his way to the hospital when he had met Frank so abruptly. For an instant he too had held his breath. Then as he hurried on, he could not but wonder whether Frank's chin in collar, hands deep in pockets attitude, had meant that he was trying to

slink past. Certainly his greeting had been sudden and disturbed. "Well," declared the priest to himself, "I'll settle this whole thing tomorrow. It's gone on long enough."

Father Boone entered the hospital and ascending the stairway leading to the office, found himself before the Bureau of Information.

"How is that little fire hero?" he asked of the clerk.

"I'll 'phone up and see," was the reply.

"O, don't mind, I am going right up. I just asked because I thought you had news of him here."

"It's only the serious patients whose condition we have here, Father," answered the clerk.

"In that case," remarked the priest, "at least he is not seriously ill; that is some news anyway."

There was a sign on the door of the ward saying: "*Closed*, doctors visiting." He knew that this did not apply to him, as he was allowed entrance any hour of the day or night. Still, as it was not an urgent case, he decided to wait until the doctors came out. The nurse at the desk offered him her chair, which he declined with thanks.

"But, if you don't mind," he said, "I'll sit on the edge of this table."

"Certainly, Father," she replied, "until I run and get you a chair."

"No, no," he protested, "I like this much better."

So the ice was broken.

"You have got one of my little fellows inside," he continued. "How is he getting along?"

"You mean that Daly boy?"

He nodded assent.

"Why, we are all in love with him. He is one grand boy. This morning the doctor had to remove some loose skin from his arm, and he found that he would have to do a little cutting of the flesh to get at some of the skin which had become imbedded. The boy heard him say to me, 'It will hurt him like the mischief.' The lad spoke up, 'Go ahead, Doc. If you can stand it, I guess I can.'

"The doctor didn't want to use cocaine on it, so he took the boy at his word. It was simply terrific, Father! We had to pull the skin out with pincers. He just tightened his jaws, and never let out a moan. That boy is a credit to you. He has always taken just

what was given him and has been no trouble to anybody."

As Father Boone was getting ready to reply, the doctors passed into the next ward.

The priest went in at once to see his patient. Daly's eyes, as big as saucers, greeted him.

"Well, that was a nice scare you gave us all, you little rascal," was the priest's greeting. All Bill could do was grin. "They tell me there is nothing the matter with you, that you are just a bit frightened."

"O, I don't know about the frightened part," rejoined Daly, "I guess there was somebody else in that boat, as well as myself."

"My boy, I want to congratulate you. Not on your ladder stunt, anyone could do that, and not fall off, either; but on your fortitude here. True, there are no bones broken or anything like that, but you've had a lot of acute pain to endure, and they tell me you have not whimpered. You have given the Club a good name here. William, I am proud of you."

Poor Bill! All day long he had been fortifying his resolution to tell Father Boone everything. But after this praise from the priest, he could no more touch on the affair than fly.

Two or three times he made an attempt to begin, but the words stuck in his throat. They talked on a lot of things, but after that first allusion to the Club, there did not seem to be another opening for Bill. At last, however, he made one great effort.

"Father," he cried out, "there is something on my mind, I must let it out! It's got me all on fire inside. I'll burn up unless I out with it."

Father Boone could see his excitement and knowing that the boy was in an overwrought condition, which must not be made worse, took him quietly by the hand, patted his head and said, "Now that's all right, Willie. Don't take things to heart so much; we'll have a good talk when you are yourself again." He saw Bill look steadily into his eyes and swallow once or twice, but he did not understand that the words of an accusation were sticking in the boy's throat and blocking his speech. So thinking that the lad had need of rest and quiet, he spoke a few kindly words and withdrew.

Daly felt like calling after him, but before he could make up his mind, Father Boone had gone. Usually, the priest did not leave a bed-

side without suggesting confession, if the patient were at all seriously ill. Even if the illness were slight, he frequently took occasion of it to reconcile the sick person with God, and to bring into the soul that comfort which goes so far to restore health to the body, besides bringing solace and healing to the mind. But as director of the Club, he felt a special delicacy in suggesting confession to one of his boys, and since, just now, Bill had seemed bordering on hysteria, the priest believed that a little reassurance was the proper thing.

"The poor boy got a worse shaking up than he is aware of," he thought, "but it will pass off soon. I shall see him tomorrow, and arrange to bring him Holy Communion. The dear Lord will do the rest." So he hastened home.

Daly, meanwhile, had quieted down somewhat. But reflections came thick and fast. "Father Boone congratulated me, did he? If he only knew what he was congratulating! Yes, I'm a brave boy! Couldn't open my mouth. Mulvy would act that way,—not! I wish I had a little of his 'sand.' Gee, next time I've got to get it out—even if it chokes me!"

He turned over and tried to sleep. The lights were low in the ward now, and a great quiet reigned. But sleep would not come. He began by counting sheep going through a gate. One, two, three—he got up to a hundred, and there before his eyes was a big black sheep stuck in the gate. "That's me," he uttered, and stopped the count. Then he tried going up a very high stairs, counting the steps one by one. At last he got to the top and looking about he saw a room, in disorder. Broken chairs, upset tables, pictures on the floor, and a boy spilling ink. "That's me," he sighed. Then he rehearsed all that his mother and Frank had told him of Father Boone's kindness. He saw the ambulance rushing along and the priest watching tenderly over an unconscious form. "That's me," he thought to himself.

He began to feel very thirsty. "I wish I had a drink," he sighed. An hour passed, two, three. He heard the clock strike twelve. A nurse was passing. He called to her and asked her for a drink of water. She drew near to him, observed his dry hot face and glistening eyes. His tongue was parched and thick. She felt his pulse. Then she took out a ther-

mometer and put it in his mouth. He submitted patiently to it all, but when the thermometer was withdrawn, he said beseechingly, "Please give me a drink."

The nurse assured him that she would attend to him and left his side. Going to her desk in the corridor, she called the house surgeon. "I think, doctor," she told him over the phone, "you'd better come up. That Daly boy has quite a temperature." The doctor was soon in consultation with her, and together they went to the patient. After a careful inspection, they withdrew.

"Typhoid," exclaimed the doctor.

"I was afraid so," she replied.

Chapter IV

The Field of Honor

The next morning Father Boone, in his office, at the Club, sent for Thomas Dunn. When the janitor came, the priest said, "It is several days now since that room was upset. I expected the boys to report it at once. But not even the officials have said a word to me yet. I know I could find out about it if I wished to quiz them, but I don't want to do that. It may have been some sort of a mix-up in which the fellows all feel that to say a word about it would be mean. They may not take the serious view of it that I do. So now I am going to start in, in my own way, to get at the bottom of it. And I begin with you. Have you observed anything that would give me a clue?"

"Well no, I can't say that I have," replied Dunn. "The lads have been unusually well behaved since that night."

"Very well, but if you should come across anything that will throw light on the mystery, let me know."

Dunn turned to go, but suddenly recollected something. "I don't know whether it's much of a clue, Father, or if it's worth while mentioning, but one of the boys was over to my house last night seeming to want me to talk on the matter."

"Why, that's a straw that shows how the wind blows. Who was the boy?"

"Well, you know, Father, I don't know the boys much by name. But as he was going out I called my boy Harry and I says to him, 'Harry, who is that chap, do you know'?

"'Yes, Pa,' he says, and he gave me his name, but I forget it. I'll have to ask Harry, if you like, and let you know this evening."

"Very well, Thomas, do so."

Dunn left, and was half way downstairs when he turned back again. "Pardon me, Father, but I think I've got the name or near it. Harry said the boy was Murray, but I'm not quite sure, but it was Murray, or Murphy, or Mulvy or some such name."

At the name Mulvy, an electric spark seemed to pass through the director. Dunn

did not notice it, as he went out at once. He caught the words "Thank you, Thomas," as he was leaving the room, and that was all.

But Father Boone! This was adding insult to injury! So Mulvy did know something about it! And instead of coming to the director, he had gone over to the janitor! A nice way for a trusted and honorable boy to act!

Father Boone had been trying all along to convince himself that somehow Mulvy would come out of it clear and clean. He had thought of a thousand excuses for the delay—questions of divided allegiance or some point or other of honor and so on. But Mulvy's going to the janitor to get information looked like an underhand mission, certainly. What for?—To find out what the director knew, or how he had taken it—or to arrange some explanation?

All these questions shot through his mind with the rapidity of lightning. None of them carried its own answer. All of them seemed out of harmony with what he knew of Mulvy. And yet, there were the facts.

(II)

The parochial school was around the corner from the church and club and it was at this very hour that the department of which young Harry Dunn was a member had been turned loose in the play yard for recess. A game of tag was soon on, and Dunn, dodging in and out, ran right into Ned Mullen. The collision sent Dunn sprawling to the ground. He was two years younger than Ned, but very stocky. It was nobody's fault that he got the bump; but nevertheless as soon as he rose to his feet, he rushed at Ned and gave him a kick in the shins. Ned's first impulse was to box his ears, but as the boy was so small, he merely took hold of him and gave him a good shaking.

Dunn began to blubber. In a thrice a crowd gathered, and Dunn, seeing that he was being teased, got ugly. Turning to Ned, who was about to back off with Tommy, he cried out: "Yes, you belong to the crowd that smashed up things! Father Boone will fix you!"

The threat didn't mean much to Tommy and Ned and they walked away.

Harry Dunn, however, had heard just enough from his father about the Club damage to think he could best get even by telling

his teacher about it. So, when the boys got into their school rooms again, he tried to tell the Sister that two fellows had thrown him down in the yard. She paid no attention to him. After class, he went to her again, and said that the boys who broke things at the Club were trying to pick on him. "Mind your own business, Harry," she said, "and nobody will pick on you, you little tattletale." As the boys say, he got "his."

That afternoon Father Boone, passing through the school after class, stopped to talk to the Sister in the vestibule. Just then along came young Dunn.

"Here's a young gentleman who is talking about a row at the Club," she said to the priest, as she held the lad by her eye. She thought the boy had made a mountain out of a mole hill, and that the director's shrug or laugh would show the youngster where he stood. Instead, Father Boone grew instantly serious. The Sister saw she had made a mistake, but before she could change the subject, he said, disregarding the boy:

"It was bad business, Sister. I feel ashamed and hurt about it. I did not think my boys would act so."

Then he continued, "But how did you know about it, Sister?"

"O, a little bird told me."

"Indeed, and may I ask what the little bird told you?"

"Really, Father, it's not worth while referring to. I shouldn't have recalled it but for that young lad who passed us this moment. You know him, don't you?"

"I can't say that I do."

"He is Harry Dunn, Father, the son of your janitor."

"O, that's interesting, Sister; so it seems that I know less—"

At this moment he was interrupted by a messenger who told him that he was wanted for a sick call. He hurried to the rectory. A woman in the parlor was waiting to give him the name and address of a sick person. "Why, that," he exclaimed, "is the house where the Dalys live."

"Yes, Father."

"How old is this boy you say is so ill?"

"About twelve, Father."

"Do you know whether he is seriously ill; has the doctor been there?"

"O yes, Father, and he said the boy had

typhoid. There is another case in the house also, and the Board of Health has been around."

He promised to go at once to administer the consolations of religion to the sick boy. "I am glad the Board of Health is on the ground," he said to himself, as he was on his way over. "From what I saw of conditions there, it's a wonder they're not all down with typhoid. I suppose Willie would have had it, except that he is such a robust and active lad."

When the priest had finished his ministrations, he went up to the Daly flat. After his knock at the door, he heard quick movements inside and then a rather long silence. He rapped again. This time the door was opened and Mrs. Daly met him. The reason for the delay was evident. She had been crying and did not care to exhibit herself to a neighbor. But on seeing Father Boone she broke out afresh, at the same time showing him a telegram she had just received from the hospital. It read: "William Daly dangerously ill. You will be admitted any hour." It was signed by the superintendent.

Father Boone put two and two together,

"Typhoid." He made up his mind at once just what to do. "You stay here until I send a cab for you; then come along." He himself hurried downstairs, walked quickly over to the trolley and in ten minutes was at the hospital. Not until he got there did he go to the phone and call up a taxi for Mrs. Daly. He had a good start now, and could pave the way for her.

Going immediately to the ward, he found the nurse at Daly's bedside. "Rather sudden," he remarked.

"Very," she replied.

"There were no signs last night, nurse, as far as I could see. What seems to be the matter?"

"Typhoid."

All this was in a whisper.

He continued, "I'll just see how he is and say a few words to him before his mother comes."

"He is delirious, Father."

"Maybe he'll know me," he said, and bent over the patient. He took his hand gently, saying, "Willie boy, you have not said 'hello' to me yet." No answer. "You know Father Boone, don't you, Willie?"

"Hello, Frank," was the response. "I wish I had your 'sand.' I say, Frank," he continued, "I'm starting right when this thing is over." He paused for a moment and then resumed. "I don't blame the fellows. I'm down on myself now." Another pause. "Frank, you tell Father Boone I'm sorry. I want to see him. You are a brick. I am . . . O, I'll tell . . . the whole thing if it . . . chokes me." This last was said with an effort.

Father Boone attributed all he was saying to delirium. He realized that the patient's condition was serious, and prepared to give him the Last Sacraments. As he took out the Holy Oils, and was about to anoint him the boy's eyes looked calmly at him and he uttered the words: "Hello, Father."

The priest was very glad that the boy was conscious, and not knowing how long he would remain so, he started to hear his confession as quickly as possible. He began by receiving from him a general acknowledgment of his sins and contrition for them, intending, if time permitted, to hear his confession in detail. "You are sorry for all the sins of your life, my child?"

"Yes, Father."

"Say the Act of Contrition."

He began: "O my God, I am most heartily sorry for all my sins and I . . . and I . . . and . . ."

When Father Boone saw that William was lapsing into unconsciousness, he took a crucifix and holding it to the boy's lips, said, "Kiss the crucifix, my child, and say, 'Jesus have mercy on me.'" As he gave him absolution, he heard him murmur, "Jesus . . . have mer . . . ." and off he fell again into delirium.

The priest was sorry that the confession had been cut short, but was very glad that he was able to give him absolution. Then he anointed him, for Daly's condition did not permit of his receiving Holy Viaticum. The priest had barely finished the administration of the last rites, when Mrs. Daly appeared. He quickly approached her and cautioned her sternly not to show emotion in the presence of the patient, as any excitement would only make his condition worse.

"O my Willie, my Willie," was her answer, and her body shook with emotion. "Willie was the good boy, he was the good boy to his mother. O blessed Mother, help me now in my hour."

The first burst of grief over, she really showed wonderful control and approached the bed quite calmly. Bill was now sleeping. The mother sat by his side with her hand on his. Seeing that the priest was waiting, she said, "Are you waiting to give him the Sacraments, Father?"

"No, I have already done that," he replied, "but, if you don't mind, I'll wait for you."

"No, no, Father dear," she said, "don't wait for me, for I am afraid it would be a long wait."

He considered for a moment, and decided to leave.

(III)

On his way home, Father Boone had time to review the occurrence at the school earlier in the day. It was the Dunn boy whom the Sister had pointed out, as she told him the little incident. He said the Club boys were "picking on him." It could be that they were retaliating for something connected with the Club affair. He did not like the set of things. But if he could have seen what was occurring in some other quarters, he might have liked the looks of things still less.

After school, Ned and Tommy sought Frank. The Regal High was but a short distance from the parochial school.

"Say, Frank," began Ned, "that Dunn kid is a fresh guy. Today, after bumping into Tommy and me, he got ugly and gave me a kick. I shook him up a bit, and he starts in and blabs about the fight with you and 'Bull.' Afterwards, he told the Sister about it, only he made it ten times worse than it was. To hear him talk you would think we had a free fight over there. He spoke of breaking things and a lot of stuff like that."

Of course Frank saw at once what had happened. Harry had heard his father mention the damaged room. He kept his surmises to himself, however, replying, "O, don't mind that fellow, he's only a kid."

"But, Frank," continued Ned, "if you heard how the thing has spread and how your name is mixed up in it, you'd mind."

Frank laughed off this observation, and tried to turn the talk to something else. But as they walked along, they were stopped by at least three different boys who asked what the row at the Club had been.

By that time Frank began to get anxious.

The mix-up was bad enough to face when only the Club and Father Boone and his mother knew. How could the explanation ever catch up with the story—especially if young Dunn got to talking! Of course, in the end everything would come out all right. In due time, Father Boone would learn the truth from Daly himself, but meanwhile—

He knew his mother was as much upset about the misunderstanding as himself. And to have affairs still further complicated would be pretty bad. Father Boone must know a good deal, for the place could not have been set right without his knowledge. But he did not know who had done it, nor any of the details. That was evident from Daly's story, and so up to now, he was angry with Frank because he had not reported. It had all the evidences of a free row surely—and his indignation was justified—and especially against an official. But now suppose this talk should reach Father Boone and that it should associate him with the affair as one of its leaders!

The very thought made Frank shudder, until he recalled that Bill was not only willing, but anxious to make a clean breast of his spiteful deed. So in the end, all would turn

out right. For the time being, he was under a cloud. There was nothing to do but wait for the wind to blow it away or the sun to dissipate it.

But even as he meditated, the cloud was getting thicker and blacker. He had hardly returned to school for the afternoon session, when his teacher asked him if the report were true, that he was deposed from his office as secretary. The inquiry gave him a distinct shock. He had the greatest respect and affection for his professor, and that Mr. Collins should entertain for a moment the thought that he had done anything to deserve the censure of Father Boone, was very painful to him.

"This is the first I have heard of it," Frank answered.

"I am so glad I was misinformed," was the reply.

That afternoon, Frank's thoughts could not be held in check. There was just the possibility that Father Boone had taken some further action. When his name was called for recitation in Caesar his mind was elsewhere. It was not like Frank to hesitate when called upon, but now he was at sea. The

teacher saw his predicament, and having genuine regard for him said, "Don't you agree with the preceding translation? Smith, try that passage again." Smith repeated and Frank, now master of the situation, took up the portion assigned him. But his mind soon wandered away again. He began to reflect on the consideration his teacher had shown him, and to wonder if his absent-mindedness suggested the disquiet of a guilty conscience. It seemed as though every fellow in the class was watching him.

When school was out, he went to Mr. Collins to thank him. "I was all upset, sir, by what you said before class."

"I'm sorry, Frank, that I referred to the matter at all. I really was sure, knowing you as I do, that it was a false rumor."

"Thank you, Mr. Collins."

After school, Frank went straight to the Club to see if Father Boone were there, and to find out from him if there were anything back of the report. The priest was not in his office. Frank turned into the reading room and from force of habit went to look at the notice board where the items of interest to the Club were usually posted. To his amazement he read:

"The Office of Secretary is hereby discontinued. Members will hereafter deal personally with the Director.

Jerome Boone."

Frank's head was in a whirl. He began to get dizzy. Falling back into a chair, he repeated again and again: "The office of Secretary is hereby discontinued." "A direct slap!" he gasped. "Condemned unheard. It is not fair. That's no way to deal with a fellow. It's an outrage. I did not believe that Father Boone could do such a thing. Condemned, disgraced and the whole parish talking about it! It will cut my mother to the very heart. I've got to keep it from her—to put a stop to it right now. I'll go to the rectory and have it out with him. This is what I get for not taking a firm stand in the beginning."

He sat with his head on his arms on the table. His inclination was to give way to his feelings, but after a moment, he jumped up, stood erect and exclaimed, "I'll win out."

He started for the rectory, but on his way, he began to hesitate. "What grievance have I got anyway? When it comes down to

'kicking,' what 'kick' have I got coming? From Daly's own story, there was an awful job done. No one on earth could believe it the work of one or two. Father Boone naturally expected some word from me. And if old Dunn told him I was over there pumping him—? That was a bad move—puts me in deeper. Young Dunn was only repeating what he got from his father. It certainly looks bad. And if I start something, what can I say? I'd be cornered, no matter which way I'd turn. The only thing to do is to lie low for a while, and let things shape themselves. Daly'll tell the whole thing himself and then it will be my turn. And then Father Boone—gee—I'll feel sorry for him then!" So Frank put off his visit to the priest and went home.

(IV)

If Frank had experienced a sense of relief in deciding not to see the priest, it was short-lived. He walked into his home, and faced Father Boone and his mother engaged in serious conversation. His heart leaped into his mouth. The worst had happened! The priest evidently considered this affair so serious that he had come to see his mother.

And it would break her heart to have a priest complain of him! And especially Father Boone —that would be a dagger thrust! These and like thoughts flashed through his mind in an instant.

As a matter of fact, Frank's deductions were all wrong. Mrs. Mulvy was the President of the Parish Relief Association of which Father Boone had charge. Hence it was not unusual for him to call on Mrs. Mulvy to give her a list of poor to be visited and helped. He was on such an errand now.

Father Boone's method of directing a club found no place for carrying information to parents. He preferred to settle matters with the boys themselves, and in a manner that would be helpful to them, and that would leave no sting. In his mind, it would be an acknowledgment of defeat if he had to carry a case into the home. He had never done it yet.

After his instant of hesitation, and convinced that he knew the subject of conversation, Frank assumed an indifferent air and stepped forward to greet the priest. Father Boone continued to talk. Frank waited a moment, bewildered, and then said, "Good afternoon, Father."

"Good afternoon, *sir*," was the response.

Frank stiffened, every muscle of his body became like steel. He could not look at his mother. If he did, he might break down and he did not want to give the director that satisfaction. So he stood facing the priest.

All three were embarrassed. Mrs. Mulvy knew the significance of that *sir*. Frank, sure now of his suspicions, made a desperate plunge.

"I am sorry, Father, that you felt obliged to carry this matter to my mother, but I suppose you know best."

Father Boone literally gasped. For a moment he looked at Mrs. Mulvy, then he turned back to Frank. Realizing that the matter had come to an issue, and without his doing, he said, in a deliberate, penetrating tone,

"Frank Mulvy, do you, or do you not, know anything about that shameful destruction at the Club?" Already Frank saw his folly. He was in just the corner he had foreseen. Acknowledgment would mean the betrayal of a sacred confidence. Every moment of silence was agony to his mother. Denial he could not make, for he had never in his whole life made a conscious mis-statement. Silence was fatal. Denial was impossi-

ble. Acknowledgment was betrayal of Bill's confidence. What could he do?

Again the priest said slowly and solemnly: "Do... you... or... do you... not... know... about that act of destruction?"

"Speak up, Frank," his mother said, imploringly.

At the sound of that voice and the look of that face, he collapsed. His pent up emotions of the past days burst out in sobs, his body shook convulsively. Both priest and mother tried to soothe him. That only made it worse. Father Boone turned away and stood at the window, looking out. Then with only a quiet and casual good-bye, he took up his hat and left.

Hardly had the door closed behind him when Frank threw his arms about his mother, and burst into renewed sobs. Mrs. Mulvy was puzzled and distressed but she had full faith in her boy. She let him have his cry out, and then said gently: "Don't mind, dear, you are mother's best boy; she knows this will come out all right."

"O mother, if you feel that way, and will trust me, without asking me a single question, I promise you it will come out more than all right."

"Very well, darling," she replied, "I'll say nothing again on the matter except you yourself bring it up."

"O, I'm so glad, mother, because now I can see it through. I don't mind what others say or think as long as it is all right with you."

"But I feel so sorry for Father Boone," she sighed. "He is apparently all at sea. He thinks the world of you, Frank, and that is what hurts him."

"I know, mother, and that is what hurts me, too, but there is no help for it at present. He's got to get all the facts first—and I can't—" He broke off and then added, shyly, "You know, mother, I think we are a good deal the same. Only, of course, his will is so strong, he won't show what he feels. The other day there were tears in his eyes, but he didn't know I was seeing him."

"Mother is proud of her boy to hear him talk that way. I'm so glad that you're not angry with poor Father Boone—it is hard on him."

"Maybe I would be, mother, if I did not know him so well."

A great load was off Frank's mind and the tension was gone. Nothing could matter now.

He could face anything and everything. He realized that, at most, only a few days would intervene before Bill Daly would clear up the mystery.

(V)

When Father Boone left Mrs. Mulvy and Frank, he had indeed troublesome thoughts for companion. The conviction that Frank knew a good deal about the matter was now absolutely sure. Evidently, also, the boy was in some way implicated in a conspiracy of silence. His whole appearance showed that he was holding back something and that he was doing so reluctantly. His complete collapse indicated a great interior struggle. It also showed that the boy was naturally high-minded and noble. For otherwise, he never would have broken down, as he did.

But what was holding him back? Why should he fear to trust the director? He found no answer to free him from his quandary. He would gladly settle the whole matter, and regard the affair closed, if he considered only his own feelings. But his duty to the boys must not be shirked because it caused present pain to himself or others. "Better

to have a tooth pulled," he said, "than to have it the source of future trouble."

When Father Boone entered his room, he found several letters on his desk. They were mostly Church matters. But one was different. It was on better quality of stationery than the ordinary. The envelope and the paper bore a monogram. Opening it, he found these lines:

> Dear Father Boone:
>
> I want to thank you for all your kindness to John. Enclosed is a little contribution for the Club. Hereafter, it will be impossible for John to attend the Club meetings, and so I request you to drop his name from membership.
>
> Sincerely yours,
>
> Julia Harkins.
>
> (Mrs. John Harkins.)
>
> To Rev. Jerome Boone, S. J.

John Harkins resigned from the Club!... Anyone who knew Father Boone's ideas about the Club would have understood at once what this resignation meant to him. Mrs. Harkins' letter didn't explain why it was "impossible for John to attend the Club" but it was

clearly written between the lines. John Harkins was a boy enjoying exceptional home advantages and his refinement, manliness and social standards made him just the type to give "tone" to the Club.

Mrs. Harkins was rightly very careful of the associations her son formed, and Father Boone had been her guarantee that in the Club John would mingle with perhaps poor, but good and manly boys. Evidently rumors of the affair had reached her.

"The Club is discredited! The director has been asleep. Cockle in the field. And here I am sitting and allowing the weeds to grow and the wheat to be choked. I will get to the bottom of this at once. With the Club's name in question, I am certainly justified in drastic action—in probing the matter directly. I will send for Mulvy right away. I should have done it long ago."

In answer to his summons, Frank was on hand a half hour ahead of time that evening, but not ahead of Father Boone. He went straight to the director's office and found him engaged at his desk.

"Sit down, Frank," the priest began, as he stopped work. "I am going to get right down

to business. I am speaking to you as an official of the Club. The Club is being discredited. The parish is filled with reports and rumors. I am being discredited. Look at that letter. Things have gone too far. Heretofore, I have not asked you any questions on this matter because your duty was plain. I wanted you to perform it like a man, unsolicited. You have not done it, I regret to say, and now I must question you like the others. The welfare of the Club is at stake, and its fitness for carrying on its work, imperiled. Decent parents won't want their boys to belong. It is abroad in the parish that rowdyism is rampant here. I want to nail the nasty rumor, and place it where it belongs. There is an explanation, and I want you to help me get it. Frank Mulvy, did you have a hand in the wreckage wrought in the Club the other night? Answer me *yes* or *no*."

"No, Father."

"Do you know anything about it?"

"That I cannot answer, Father."

"You cannot answer! You cannot answer! Do you mean to say that you refuse to do your duty? Cannot! What do you mean, sir?"

In an agitated voice, Frank replied, "Fath-

er, I cannot say any more, except to add that I am doing what you yourself have always inculcated."

"Neglect of duty! Explain yourself, sir."

"Not neglect of duty, Father, but regard for honor. You have always held that up to us, along with our religion, and it is honor now that makes me decline to say more. I will answer any questions about myself or anything that I can answer by official knowledge, and take the consequences. More I cannot say."

"And more I do not want you to do, Frank. But tell me, why did you not at least inform me of the wreckage; that was official?"

"Father, I did not know of that until recently."

"What, do you mean to say that all that terrible row occurred, and that it's out all over the parish, and you, the chief official of the Club at the time, did not know of it?"

"Father," declared Frank, in trembling tones, "I know it all looks bad, all the appearances are against me, I have only my word and character to stand by me."

"It is your character that has stood by you till now, sir. Were you not Mulvy, I had acted differently. But it is because you are Mulvy

that I have trusted, until the Club and its director are discredited. But what's the matter, boy?"

For of a sudden, Frank had turned white. He swayed a moment, but Father Boone caught him in his arms, laid him gently on the floor. It took but a dash of cold water to fully restore him, and for a moment he just stared into the face of the priest. Then Father Boone noticed how his color rushed back and his jaws set and he realized that the boy was suffering keen mental anguish. It came to him that there was something most unusual and extraordinary about the whole thing.

After a bit Frank said in a voice choked with emotion, "I know you have suffered, Father, and that has hurt me." He could say no more but after a little, he began again. "At first, I did not know anything about the matter, and when I did know, I could not speak. I wish I could clear the matter up, but I cannot do so honorably, and I know you don't want me to do it dishonorably."

The priest patted him on the back and told him to do what was right and not to think of consequences. "And as you consider silence

the right thing now, I do not wish you to do otherwise than as you are doing."

"Thank you, Father," replied Frank. "But please—I am true to you."

"Yes, I know," answered the priest, "but it's all a mystery, nevertheless, and it must be solved, and," he added vigorously, "it shall be solved."

Frank went below. The priest closed the door, and fell into a brown study. "What am I to do?" he reflected. "This thing must be nailed. But how?"

He was not looking for boys to punish, but for the solution of the problem, and the clearing of the good name of the Club. Taking out a large sheet of paper, he wrote in big letters for the notice board in the library reading room:

"Boys of St. Leonard's Club:

This is an appeal to the boys who have the good name of the Club, and their own at heart. I want no boy to tell on another. But I do request that the perpetrators of that act of wanton destruction declare themselves to me at once. You know my ways, and that I am the first to

make every allowance and to see fair play. I await in the office a response to this notice this very night.

Jerome Boone."

The first boy to read the notice was Ned Mullen. "Whew!" he exclaimed, with a long whistle. He ran into the games-room, "Hey, fellows, see what's up—some notice—riot act!"

At first they paid no attention to him, saying merely, "Quit your guying, kid."

But as he shouted out, "Frank, Tom, Dick, come see the board, a real live circus is in town," they all dropped their games, and trooped into the reading room.

"Gee!" was the exclamation from every throat.

"That's news."

"What row is that?"

"Wanton destruction!"

"That sounds good."

"O, but say, it's the real thing."

"That's Father Boone's handwriting. What does it mean?"

Then they fell to asking questions all together.

Finally, it settled down to what had hap-

pened, and when it happened, and how it happened. Everybody asked everybody else what it was all about, and everybody told everybody he did not know. Some boys got around Frank and began to quiz him.

"Did you see any damage done, Mulvy?"

"No."

"Let's form a committee and send our regrets to Father Boone, and also say there must be a mistake."

They all agreed.

"Name Mulvy spokesman of the committee," shouted McHugh.

Frank protested, but they paid no attention to him. Soon the committee was formed, and was ready to go upstairs. They waited for Frank. As he did not move they said, "Step along, Mulvy, we are all ready."

"I said no. Count me out."

"Count you out, nothing," yelled several. "You're elected, now go."

Frank did not move. Sunney Galvin, one of the biggest boys in the Club, and a good fellow, walked up to him and said, "No nonsense, Frank, face the music; you owe it to Father Boone and the Club to help set matters right."

"Sunney, I said no, and that settles it."

"It settles nothing," said Sunney. "Unless you are in the scrape yourself, you'll go like a man and do your part. You have been chosen."

"Chosen or not, I don't go. That's final," he said with vigor.

"O ho, Mulvy, so there's somebody involved after all! You wouldn't play safe if you were not concerned."

"See here, Galvin," said Frank, "you know me well enough to know that I am square. Give a fellow credit for knowing his own business."

"O that's very well, and all that, Mulvy. But your business here and now is to do the duty you've been elected to. And if you don't, you're yellow."

"Yes, and something worse," cried another.

"Do you know too much for your own reputation?" shouted another. For although Frank was the best liked and most admired boy in the Club, boys are boys, and they talk right out. Frank knew they had a certain amount of right on their side and that was what helped him to swallow the insults, which otherwise he would have resented vigorously.

The crowd was rather amazed itself that he did not resent their insinuations more than he did. Gradually the word passed that he was in the thing himself, and did not dare face Father Boone. Dick resented that intensely.

"He is not, and you all know it."

"Hank, old man," he said, "clear yourself, come along with us."

"I can't, Dick."

"O nonsense," replied Dick, "you've got some honor bug in your bonnet and you're making a fool of yourself. Come along now, and give the crowd a solar plexus."

"Dick, please don't urge. I tell you I can't go."

The crowd stood around, listening to the dialogue, giving Dick every encouragement and signalling to Frank to give in. When the fellows saw his stubborn stand, they resented it. It was not fair. It looked compromising.

While they stood, thus-minded, Dick said rather timidly, "May I ask you a question, Hank?" There were only a few boys in the Club who could call Frank by that name. Dick was one of them.

"Certainly, kid, fire away."

"Did you have anything to do with this racket?"

"No."

"I knew it," said Dick. "That's why I asked you. "Now another question. Do you know anything about it?"

"That's another matter," said Frank.

"We know it's another matter," shouted several, "and we've got a right to know. It concerns the bunch."

"The bunch doesn't make wrong right," fairly yelled Frank. "The bunch doesn't make a mean thing honorable. Yes, I know about it, and that's why I can't go. I can't say more because I have said all I can say, in honor."

"Honor!" hissed one of the boys, "it's queer honor that will distress Father Boone and queer a whole crowd."

By this time the racket had grown into a half riot. The voices were loud and raucous. Their echoes reached Father Boone above. He closed his door as he did not want to hear what was not intended for his ears. But he had caught enough to let him know that there was a deepening mystery about the affair, and that most of the boys were not a party to it.

Things were gradually shaping for a fight.

It was clear that Frank had taken a firm stand. It was equally clear that the crowd was not satisfied or in sympathy with it.

Some of the larger boys did not relish his excusing himself on the ground of honor. Fred Gibney bawled out, "You're prating a lot about honor, Mulvy. What about the Club's honor?"

"Look here, Gibney," snapped Frank, "I have the Club's honor as much at heart as any of you, and you know it. But just now—" his voice quivered, "I know how you regard the matter. I suppose I'd feel the same if I were in your place. All I can say is that I know what I know in confidence, and I'm in honor bound. Will that satisfy you? I have said more than I intended to, but it's because I want to go the limit to satisfy the crowd on my stand."

"That sounds like a book speech," retorted Gibney, "and it's all very well for you to hide behind honor. Any of us could get out of a bad hole that way."

"That means that you think I am lying?" questioned Frank, his eyes fairly aglow.

"It means what you want to make of it," snapped Gibney.

Frank jumped from his place to get at Gibney. Dick got in between the two, but found it more than he could do to restrain Frank. As blows were on the point of being exchanged, steps were heard on the stairs, and the boys signalled that Father Boone was on the way down. At his approach, the boys assumed a more or less quiet posture. Not so Frank. He stood just where he was and as he was. His fists were clenched, his whole frame was trembling with excitement, and his face was determined and pale.

Father Boone took in the situation at a glance. He appeared, however, not to see the impending fight. Beckoning to Ned, he said, "I want you and four or five boys to help me unpack something upstairs." He knew that this interruption would give all a breathing spell, and stop further animosity. Then like a flash, it occurred to him to settle the whole thing then and there.

"Boys," said he, "your shouts and some of your talk have reached me upstairs. I am very much hurt over this affair, and I know, from what has happened, that most of you feel as I do. I caught some of the words between Gibney and Mulvy. They reveal a lot

to me. First of all, apparently, what has happened was not the work of the crowd, but of a few only and you are as much mystified as I am. I am glad to know that the Club as a whole is not implicated. But a bad report has gone through the parish in regard to that occurrence, and I am bound, in duty to the parish and in devotion to you, to clear up the matter.

"And so I say now to you all, what I have already said by that notice, I ask the boys who perpetrated that rowdyism or who know anything about it, to stand out and declare themselves!"

Not a boy moved. After a moment's silence, Frank came forward and stood before the priest. "Well, Frank, have you anything to say?"

"Only what I said to you upstairs, Father."

"Do you still feel in conscience that you can say no more?"

"Yes, Father."

"Very well," replied the priest. After a pause he continued, "I do not want any boy to act dishonorably. But there are certain cases where justice is concerned, where the rights of many are in conflict with those of a

few, where scandal is involved, where the instrument for doing substantial good is in danger of being destroyed; under such circumstances it is not only not dishonorable to speak out, but it is highly honorable to do so. I know a boy's code of honor, and how he regards a 'squealer.' But it is not squealing to denounce a criminal. And in this case nothing short of a crime has been committed. Wilful damage has been done to property, and consequent damage has been done to reputation. If you saw a boy break into your home, and destroy valuable things, you would not consider it squealing to denounce him to the authorities. That very thing has occurred here. And you are in duty bound to stop sin or crime if it is in your power to do so.

"If you know those who are guilty in this matter, it is your duty to see to it that they declare themselves, in order that the good name of the Club may not suffer further, and that the damage done to property may be made good.

"With this explanation, I again ask those concerned to declare themselves." Not a boy moved.

"Frank Mulvy, after what I have said, do

you still find you are not justified in speaking out?"

"I do, Father."

"I respect your conscience, Frank, but I am hard put to find a justification for it. If you were a lawyer or a doctor or a priest, and had got your information in your capacity of adviser, I could see your point of view. But you are a boy of fourteen, and hardly of the age that invites confidence. If I did not know you as well as I do, I should consider you a party to the affair. As it is, you seem to be the only boy who knows anything about the matter, or—the only one who has the courage to say so."

Here Dick spoke up. "Father, the whole thing has us puzzled. We do not know yet just what you refer to. You speak of damage and rowdyism. We have not seen any. It was only by report that we heard about it and we've got into lots of trouble denying and resenting it. Until your notice was put up today, we treated the entire matter as a calumny. The only row we know of was that scrap between Frank and Bill Daly. That was nothing. Frank himself went up to tell you about that. We were all at sea when we saw you so indig-

nant. We formed a committee to wait on you. As things are it looks bad for Frank. But we all know him and I—I—want to go on record now as standing by him, if he says he can't tell, in honor."

Frank seized his hand. "Dick, you're true blue."

"That's all right, Richard," said Father Boone slowly, and then, taking Frank by the hand, he added, "Frank, I trust you absolutely."

"Then I am ready for anything, Father."

Gibney now came up rather sheepishly, saying "Mulvy, I hope you'll pardon me."

"Nothing to pardon, old man, you did what any fellow would do," answered Frank. Then he swung around to the crowd quickly. "Fellows, I feel I'm 'in bad.' Everything is against me as things go ordinarily. You have nothing but my word for my defence. I hardly deserve such trust. But I hope you won't regret it."

"Frank, take that notice off the bulletin board and put it on my desk upstairs." As Frank left the room, Father Boone turned to the crowd.

"Boys, a good character is the best thing in life. Frank Mulvy's character alone stands between him and your condemnation. If

this matter has no other issue than the present, it is worth while. I could talk on uprightness a month, and it would not impress you as much as what has happened before us."

At this point Frank returned and Tommy spoke up: "Will you tell us, Father, what it is that you are so much worked up over? We don't know what has happened, you know, about breakage and wanton destruction."

"I hope," said the priest, "that every boy here is as you are, Tommy, wholly ignorant of the matter. That only adds to the mystery, for you may as well expect a man to walk without legs as to have a lot of things broken and smashed without arms. Whose were the arms, if not yours of the Club, I'd like to know? I shall describe to you what occurred, and leave the mystery to you."

Then in a few words he told them how he had come to the Club a few mornings ago, and found it all upset, chairs broken, tables overturned, pictures torn down, ink spilled on the floor, and the rest of it. As the narration went on, the eyes of the boys got as big as saucers. If looks and gestures were significant, they told of surprise, disgust, condemnation. As he finished, Dick spoke:

"Father, that solves one mystery. We could not understand why you withdrew the McCormack treat, and took on so dreadfully. We know, now, and I for one want to beg your pardon for any feeling I had against you."

"Me, too!", "Me, too!", came from different parts of the room.

"That is one cloud rolled away, boys," said the priest. "May it be an augury that the others and bigger ones will vanish also. We are like travelers in the desert who often see things where they do not exist. Weary and exhausted caravans frequently have visions of trees and springs which lure them on, only to see them vanish in thin air. Scientists call it a *mirage*. Life, too, has its mirages."

"How strange," said Frank to himself, as they were leaving the room, "Bill and I used the same expression when we were talking together at the hospital."

The boys went home a pensive lot. But everyone of them was determined to solve the mystery.

Chapter V

The Holy Grail

By this time the whole parish knew about the affair at the Club. Like all reports, it increased in the telling until there was the general impression that the Club was a pack of rowdies. Many a father and mother wondered why Father Boone tolerated such an organization.

"I thought these boys were in good keeping," said one mother to another.

"Yes, and it's worse than we know of," replied the other, "for I tried to get at the facts from my Johnnie, but he was as close as a clam. Unless it was something dreadful, he wouldn't mind telling his mother."

The fact was that the boys had reached an understanding not to talk about the affair at all. They were determined to clear the Club's name and until they had something definite to offer, explanations, they decided, had best be omitted. So 'mum' was the word.

Mrs. Mulvy was returning from early Mass, that morning, when Mrs. Doyle, a woman she highly regarded, stopped her to say that it was too bad that Frank was mixed up in the row at the Club. Mrs. Mulvy only smiled and remarked that she thought there must be some mistake. But a little later in the day, Mrs. Duffy called on her and after a few conventional remarks, said "I really think it is too bad, Mrs. Mulvy, that those boys should be up to such mischief."

"Why, what do you refer to, Mrs. Duffy?"

"I thought you knew all about it—that wholesale smash-up at the Club. Surely it was disgraceful. Furniture broken, the pictures and walls disfigured and the whole house ransacked. It's a wonder some of them were not arrested."

This was news to Mrs. Mulvy. She had heard Father Boone call the doings at the Club serious, but she supposed that they were only serious in his eyes, because of the high standard he had set for the boys. Now she heard for the first time of wholesale damage, of wrecked rooms and furniture! "Are you sure of all this?" she inquired.

Mrs. Duffy replied, "It must be so, for

everybody is talking about it." Then she added, "But my boy, George, won't open his mouth about it. It must be bad if he is afraid to let me know. I am going to take him to the priest tonight and find out all about it, and if he had a hand in it—well, he'll wish he hadn't."

Mrs. Mulvy was too confused to speak. She had wondered why Father Boone was so stern when he addressed Frank as "sir." Also she had wondered at Frank's intense emotion on that occasion. "So it was really serious," she reflected. "And gossip is getting Frank all mixed up with it!"

Mrs. Duffy continued hesitatingly, "I thought I'd come over to see you first, Mrs. Mulvy, because they all say that Frank is the only one who owned up to knowing anything about it."

Mrs. Mulvy caught her breath. However, she answered, composedly enough, "I should be sorry to know that my boy was really in such awful mischief, but if he was, I am proud that he owned up to it. It is boy-like to get into a scrape, but it is very noble to stand up and admit it."

"I feel that way myself, Mrs. Mulvy. If George was in it, he will have to own up to it,

but I am sorry that he did not do so of his own accord. George is a good boy, though, I never knew him to do anything that I was ashamed of before," said Mrs. Duffy wistfully, as she took her leave. Mrs. Mulvy almost collapsed as she sank into a chair.

For a few moments she was in a state of distraction. At length she sighed, "Poor Frank!" After a while, she arose and went to a little shrine of the Blessed Virgin which she called her oratory. Here it was that the whole family knelt every night to say the rosary together. Here it was that each one said morning prayers before leaving the house for the day's occupations. She had consecrated all her children to the Blessed Mother, and begged her powerful protection for them. The Mother of God had been a good Mother to her devoted children, and so far Mrs. Mulvy had realized that devotion to Christ's Mother was one of the greatest safeguards of virtue. She knelt before the image of the Blessed Mother and prayed, "Mother of God, to whose care I have entrusted the little ones He has given me, be more than ever a Mother to my children now. Especially take under

thy protection my good boy Frank. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death. Amen."

When she arose she had decided to make no inquiries of Father Boone, nor would she have any misgivings about her boy. She would trust him.

(II)

On his way to school the same morning, Frank was stopped a number of times and asked, "What was that scrape you got into, Mulvy?" At first, he laughed it off. But gradually it irritated him, as one after another referred to it. It was his custom to make a visit to the church every morning on his way to school. This morning he went straight to the altar of the Blessed Virgin and prayed fervently that in this trying situation he would do nothing displeasing to her or her Son. He also begged her that she would be a Mother to his mother and help her in this hour of trial. Arising from prayer he felt that he could submit to misunderstanding or even injustice, and do it patiently.

On leaving the church he met Tommy and Dick also coming out.

"Gee!" exclaimed Dick, "you are in for it, Hank. Everybody says that you are the cause of the Club damage. The fellows are saying nothing, but one or two must have leaked, for it's all over the parish that you admitted you were in it."

"Yes," added Tommy, "I nearly got into a fight denying that you had a part in the matter."

"You two are true blue," answered Frank. "Things do look bad for me. But in a day or two it'll be all cleared up." He was calculating on Bill Daly's telling everything to Father Boone on his next visit to the hospital. Frank knew that the priest would see Bill every day or so until he got well, and that it was only a rush of work that had kept the director from going down again before this.

When Frank got to school he noticed almost at once that Mr. Collins seemed somewhat disturbed. He barely bade Frank good morning. When a teacher prides himself on the fact that his class bears the highest reputation in the school for deportment and application, of course he feels it keenly if one of his best boys is the subject of criticism and veiled accusations. On the way to school,

Mr. Collins had got many inquiries about Mulvy's character. 'He was glad to say that Frank was the finest boy in his class.' But by the time he reached the class room, he showed his disturbed feelings in his greeting to Frank. The boy really cared greatly for his teacher, and was hurt to think that he should lose his good opinion even for a short while.

However, class went on as usual until about ten o'clock, when the principal of the school entered the class room. He listened to the recitations for a short while and spoke approvingly of the good work being done. Then he turned to Mr. Collins and said, "Have you any of Father Boone's boys in your class?"

"I believe I have. Will the boys who belong to Father Boone's Club please stand."

Four stood up.

"That will do," said the principal. "Be seated. I should like you four boys to report at the office at noon."

At recess, the four got together and conjectured what was up. "O, it's clear," said Frank. "He wants to find out if any of the High School boys are implicated."

"What do you suppose he'll do?" remarked Redmond.

"Why, he'll quiz us, of course. He may have heard exaggerated reports of the thing."

"I don't see that it is any of his business," observed Cavanaugh.

"Well, you know," responded Frank, "that the Regal is mighty touchy about its reputation and he does not want any mud slung at it if he can help it."

At noon the four went together to the office. The principal met them and began at once.

"Boys, it's really not my affair, but I can't help being concerned. You know our school puts a value not only on learning, but on character. I should say, mainly on character. I hate to hear of any of our boys being mixed up in an ungentlemanly affair. I have called you in order to get the truth of the matter. There are bad rumors afloat. I don't trust them. Mulvy, may I ask you to state just what occurred?"

"I'd rather you'd ask Redmond, Father, if you please."

"It's all the same. I asked you, Mulvy, because they tell me you are secretary of the Club, and Mr. Collins informs me you are the leader of his class."

"Thank you, Father, but I have personal

reasons for declining to speak of the affair."

"Very well, my boy, I don't wish to embarrass you. Tell me, Redmond, just what happened."

Redmond narrated everything.

"That sounds very serious," declared the principal. "Father Boone is a good friend of mine, and very devoted to you boys. He undoubtedly feels this thing more than you can imagine."

"We know that, and really, that's what hurts us most," said Frank.

"Now, young men, I am going to ask you a question. You are not obliged to answer it unless you wish. It is outside my domain. Did any of you have a hand in that affair?"

The four answered together, "No."

"Good, I knew it. Now I can state that the High School boys were not in the mischief at all. Now another question. Do you know who did it?"

Three answered, "No."

The principal noticed Frank's silence, and turning to the boys, he dismissed them, at the same time asking Frank to stay a moment.

"My boy," he began, "you indicate that you have some knowledge of this affair. You

also show that you're concerned about Father Boone's feelings in the matter. I wish you to know that he is terribly cut up over this thing. You are, or were, an official of the Club. If, without actual dishonor, you can give him any clue to the perpetrators, you should do it, for it concerns justice and charity."

"I have considered that, Father, and I am persuaded that I must not say what I know."

"Well," said the principal, "I'll take your word for that. I know you better than you think. If you feel that way, I would not insist a particle. But bear in mind, young man, the only thing that stands between you and condemnation is yourself. With those who know you that is sufficient. With others, you may have to suffer for the stand you are taking."

"I'm suffering now, and expect to suffer more. But I know I'm right, and that's the main thing."

"I am proud of you, Mulvy," said the principal, as he dismissed him.

Outside the school it was rumored that Frank had been ordered to the principal's office and had been threatened with suspension. Color was given this report by the fact that he came out from the school alone and

much later than the rest, looking decidedly uncomfortable. The words of assurance given him by the principal had affected him deeply.

Of course the report was that he had got a dreadful laying out from the principal. There were not a few boys of the school who were glad to hear of Frank's downfall. He had been so much respected by teachers, and so well liked by his companions, that there were bound to be some fellows rather envious of him.

As he passed the first corner of the street, he encountered a group of some eight or ten boys standing around. One of the largest boys, John Morris, remarked, for Frank's benefit, "I say, fellows, lots of statues are toppling these days." For a moment Frank's blood boiled, and he was on the point of resenting the slur, when he recollected that after all, appearances were against him and he must take the consequences of his attitude. So he came up smiling. Most of the boys were of the class a year ahead of him, but Frank had always been welcomed in the older groups.

When Morris perceived, or fancied, that his shot had missed the mark, he said calmly, "I see you got a 'call-down,' Mulvy."

"Yes," said Frank, "and a hard one, too."

At this, most of the fellows sympathized with him. Boys have, for the most part, a sense of justice. They desire to see fair play —they know when to let up. When he reached home, he went straight to his mother.

"Mother," he said, "you won't listen to any of the stories and things they are saying, will you? I could speak of it—of that whole Club matter, you know, to the priest, in confession, mother, but to no one else and in no other way. If some one had told you, mother, in the most sacred confidence, something about his most secret doings, and if it was something which you never could know otherwise, would you feel justified in revealing it?"

"Certainly not, Frank."

"Well, that is my position, mother. For the present my mouth is locked, but in due time everything will be set right."

"Yes, yes, my boy. Mother knows you will do what is right. Duty costs dear, but one must pay the price. After all, if it were easy to do right, there wouldn't be much credit in it. It is the hard things that count."

"I am glad, mother, that we both look at it in the same way."

Her answer was a kiss.

(III)

On his way to the Club that evening, Frank met Dick.

"Did you hear the news, Hank?" he said. "Bill Daly is dying. He has typhoid."

"Who told you, Dick?"

"Tom Gaffney. He was down to the rectory before supper and Father Boone had just come back from the hospital. He told him that Bill was delirious three days. He also said that he had given him the last rites, and that there was slim chance for his recovery."

Frank and Dick accelerated their pace. They were both anxious to hear more about the matter. At the Club, they met Father Boone going out.

"Boys, say a little prayer for William Daly. I think he is near the end."

"Was he prepared?" asked Frank, a lump in his throat.

"Everything except confession," replied the priest. "You see, he is delirious. I have been down to see him twice a day the last two days, but he has not regained consciousness. I am going down now in hopes I may find him able to go to confession. If not, we must leave him to God and the Blessed Mother."

Saying that, he started off to the hospital. Frank turned white as a sheet.

"What's the matter, Hank?" said Dick. He could not answer. "Why, what's up, Frank?"

"O, nothing, Dick, I'm all right now."

Like a flash it had occurred to Frank. "What if Daly should die without saying anything about the Club affair!" No wonder his heart beat like a hammer! No wonder Dick showed alarm.

"I've been intending to go down and see Daly," said Frank, "but it has been one thing after another these past two days. Besides, I left him all right. Yes, I hope he comes out of it."

When the two friends entered the Club they found the crowd pretty serious. The exploit which had landed Daly in the hospital had endeared him to the fellows, and they now felt genuinely sorry for him. They began to recall their mean treatment of him on the very night of the fire. They asked one another what it was he had wanted to say, when they gave him no chance to open his mouth. Everything occurred to them except the one thing, the damage at the Club. Somehow

that never seemed to connect itself with Daly.

As they sat around more or less in silence, Frank said, "Tomorrow is the First Friday; what do you say, fellows, if we go to Communion for Bill?" Every boy assented.

When, about an hour later, Father Boone returned, he was very serious.

"Boys," he said, "Daly is in a critical condition. The doctors hold out little hope. Tomorrow I shall say Mass for him. I hope you boys will also remember him in your prayers."

"We are all going to Communion for him tomorrow, Father," said Ned.

"O, that's good," answered the priest. "That's very good of you. God knows what is best. His holy Will be done, but we shall pray that if it is God's Will, he may be spared."

"Was he conscious?" anxiously asked Frank.

"No," answered the priest, "I have been watching him carefully the past two days, but so far he has not got out of his delirium." Frank had a return, suddenly, of that faint feeling. True, the Club damage was in the background now, in the presence of death, but it was only deferred, not settled. And

what would happen if the secret died with Daly?

Frank was extremely conscientious. He was not counting on what he could lawfully do in case Daly should die. He was determined that if worse came to worst he would bear the brunt of the disgrace himself rather than say a word that would blacken the name of one who had passed away. He must not flinch. He must be a real Knight of the Cross.

Frank left the Club much earlier than usual and alone. Something seemed to draw him to the hospital. At any rate, after five minutes, he found himself on the avenue going down to where Bill Daly lay in delirium. He got permission at the office to visit him. When he reached the patient, he found Mr. and Mrs. Daly there. Mrs. Daly welcomed him and introduced him to Mr. Daly as "that nice boy I told you about."

"And you are Willie's friend?" said Mr. Daly.

"Yes, I am glad to say."

"O, he was the good boy," continued Bill's father. "He should have had a better chance!"

Frank said nothing.

Then the mother began, "Willie was all I had to live for these many years, and now that

his father's himself again, maybe God will take away my boy. Oh, but it's a cruel world and hard to understand! But God knows best."

"We are all going to Communion for him tomorrow," said Frank, sympathetically. "When Father Boone told us that William was dangerously ill, all the boys of the Club agreed to go to Holy Communion for him. You know tomorrow's the First Friday."

"O, thank you, you are such good boys," she sighed.

Frank did not know whether to stay or go. Bill lay there unconscious, muttering from time to time. His father and mother sat by the bed on either side. Frank was standing. They were in a private room. Bill had been moved from the ward after a visit from Mr. Roberts. Every comfort that good nursing and attention could give was supplied. An automobile, moreover, took Bill's parents to and from the hospital. Mr. Roberts had told Mrs. Daly that as soon as her boy got well he would put him to school and see him through to any profession he chose, and that he would place Mr. Daly in a good position.

Mrs. Daly told all this to Frank as he stood

looking down into the patient's fevered face. "But now I suppose it's all over with Willie," she groaned, "God's ways are not our ways. His holy will be done! I told Mr. Roberts about you, and how good you were to Willie and me. He said he wants to see you. He will be down soon, so you must wait till he comes."

"I shall be glad to," replied Frank.

Bill was tossing about a good deal and now he began a string of incoherent words. His father and mother bent over him to see if they could help him in any way. But he was only rambling. After a little while, he began to speak again. "Dad, you'll never drink again, will you? Dad, you'll be good to Ma, won't you?" Frank was about to retire when Mrs. Daly beckoned to him to remain.

"Don't mind what he says, dear," she whispered. "He talks that way all day." Then she added, the tears filling her eyes, "and what he says is so often the truth. But sometimes he talks awful nonsense. Just before you came, he was telling us about smashing tables and furniture at the Club, poor boy!"

'And what he says is so often the truth," repeated Frank mentally.

Again Bill began to talk. "O, he has 'sand.'"

"I wonder what that means?" asked Mrs. Daly.

Frank shrugged his shoulders.

"But, he's good, too," continued Bill. "That's why he has 'sand.' What a cur I was to put him in bad." Then, after a pause, "Mulvy, never again for me! Straight goods for mine. No more yellow for Bill Daly."

His parents looked at one another. It was all Greek to them. But it had much meaning for Frank. Mr. Daly sat there in deep thought. He was thinking of his early days, his happy home, his fond child. And then came the years after. The broken home, the broken hearts and here now, his dying boy.

"God is punishing me," he thought to himself. "But I wish He would not punish the mother for my sins. O God, spare my boy!"

This last he said out loud. Frank and Mrs. Daly turned suddenly toward him. His voice was choked as he said, "O God, punish me but spare those I love!" Frank's eyes filled as he gazed on the broken man before him.

Again Bill's voice was heard. "Mother, I want Frank. Send for Frank. I want Frank and Father Boone. Dad, we'll never quarrel again. Home will be nice for us all. Mother,

mother, mother!" And he lapsed into unconsciousness again.

Frank felt terribly out of place. Twice while Bill was talking, he had started to go, but Mrs. Daly held him. He seemed to be necessary to her now. He was her boy's friend and she wanted him by her. Frank perceived this and he made up his mind to wait as long as he could. After about an hour Father Boone came in.

"I was down near here on a sick call, and I thought I'd just drop in for a moment," he said. "O, you here, Frank? Well now, that's nice, I declare." And he sat down.

The doctor was making his final rounds for the evening, and entered just as the priest was seated. He saluted all, gave a special nod to Father Boone, and then, after excusing his interruption, went over to the patient. All were quiet as he made his examination. When he finished, the mother stood up and looking him direct in the eyes, said, "Doctor, is my boy going to die?"

"We never know, Madam. We can't tell. We do all we can, and hope for the best. That is what you must do too. But he is very ill."

From the tone it was said in, the mother gathered that there was little hope. That was Father Boone's impression also. Mr. Daly seemed to be in a trance. His mind was elsewhere. But his taut face showed that he was thinking regrettable things.

When the doctor left, Father Boone took Mrs. Daly by the hand and said, "My dear child, you must be brave. These are the moments when our blessed Faith means everything to us. God's will is the greatest thing in the world. That is why our Lord, in teaching us to pray, said: 'Thy will be done.' He taught us that because it was necessary. He taught it by example as well as by precept. In Gethsemani He prayed, 'Not my will but Thine be done.' He, the Son of God, had His sorrows too. Resignation to God's will does not mean that we must not feel or suffer, but that in spite of our feelings, we rise up in Faith and see God as our Father. We must realize that He loves us, and we must say to Him, 'Thy will be done.' His will may cause pain now, but it is the pain that profits to life everlasting, and the pain that makes us like unto Him and dear to Him. Let us all kneel down, all of us, and say the 'Our Father.' "

Slowly, solemnly, he prayed. "Our Father . . . who art in heaven, . . . hallowed be Thy name; . . . Thy kingdom come; . . . *Thy . . . will . . . be . . . done* . . . on earth as it is in heaven. . . . Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, . . . as we forgive those who trespass against us. . . . And lead us not into temptation; . . . but deliver us from evil. . . . Amen."

There was a pause—a long pause. Frank thought it was a new prayer. He had never realized all that it meant. It seemed the best sermon he had ever heard. He felt now that he could bow his head to anything that God asked of him and say "Thy will be done." The priest arose, and the others with him.

The mother's face was changed. There was the peace of God on her countenance. In the presence of her dying son, she had the exaltation of Mary at the foot of the Cross. Mr. Daly stood stunned. In a few minutes he too showed a calm face. Father Boone was the first to break the silence.

"If God wants your boy, Mrs. Daly, let Him have him. If you asked Willie for something you would want him to give it to you.

If it was hard for him to give, you would know he loved you when he gave it. If God asks you for Willie, show Him you love Him. And now good-bye.

"It is late, Frank. You had better come along with me," he added, looking toward him. They made their parting as consoling as possible and left.

Later, as they struck the Avenue, and were going along in silence, Father Boone began to speak—half to himself, half to Frank. "I suppose you wondered that I talked to them as though Bill's death were a certainty? Well, from my experience, I think it is. If I were sure of being present when he dies, I would not have anticipated. But suppose he goes off tonight, and no one is there but themselves! They have something now to sustain them.

"Our Faith is a wonderful thing. People outside know nothing of the comfort and strength it brings in affliction. There may be some excuses for a fellow when he is young, and healthy, and well-off, to say he has no use for religion. But the whole world isn't young, nor in health, nor rich. Most people have ills of one kind or another. Some are poor, some in ill-health, some old, or misunderstood.

So our Lord chose poverty and suffering. He did not want better treatment than His followers were to have.

"When anything hard happens to me, I try to bear it cheerfully, and tell myself I should be ashamed to have better treatment than My Lord. And I've had some pretty tough things. I don't show it, but your hair would stand straight up if I were to tell you some of the things I've gone through. And do you know, when I have something terribly hard to endure, I take a positive pleasure in kneeling before the altar and saying to God: 'This costs me a lot, Lord, but I am glad it does, for I have something worth while to offer Thee'." He heaved a deep sigh.

"Frank, excuse me for talking about myself. Just thinking aloud. You see, that afflicted mother and father bring out serious reflections."

By now they had reached the rectory. "Good bye, Frank," said the priest.

"Good bye, Father," answered Frank, grasping the priest's hand very firmly.

As Frank went on his way, he said to himself, "Gee, now I know where he gets his power. When he prays, he prays. No wonder

he does so much good, and so quietly. No one knows anything about it unless by accident."

(IV)

At the hospital, Daly was sinking fast. The doctor came in frequently. And then, as often happens shortly before death, the delirium terminated for awhile. Bill looked up and saw his father and mother standing over him. It took him some seconds to realize where he was. It all came back to him in a rush. He also felt very weak. He had never felt like this before. Something told him he was going to die.

In a low voice he said to his father, "Pop, I guess I am wanted up there. I'm sorry for all I've done. I know you'll be good to ma." A pause. "Ma, it's hard to go and leave you, but Dad will take care of you like he used to, when I was a kid. That'll make up." Another pause. "Pa, ma, make the Act of Contrition with me." They knelt at his side, made the sign of the cross, and he said, falteringly but clearly:

"O my God! I am heartily sorry for having offended Thee, and I detest all

my sins, because I dread the loss of heaven and the pains of hell, but most of all because they offend Thee, my God, who art all-good and deserving of all my love. I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to confess my sins, to do penance, and to amend my life. Amen."

He fell back exhausted, from his slightly raised position.

In a little while he said, "Ma, I want Father Boone and Frank." The mother knew that the priest was rushed day and night, and hesitated to call him. Then she remembered that Father Boone had said, "If he returns to consciousness, be sure and send for me."

While she was thinking how best to do so, Mr. Roberts entered the room. He took in the situation at a glance. "Is there anything I can do for you?" he asked. On learning of Bill's request, he said, "My machine is here. I'll run up for Father Boone and the boy, and have them here in no time," and off he went.

Mother and father held either hand of their darling. Not a word was uttered. In about ten minutes, the door opened and Father Boone and Frank appeared. Bill recognized the

priest, and said with an effort, "I am——so glad—— to see——you——Father. I want to go to confession. Then I'll go home." Mr. Roberts, who was not a Catholic, found tears running down his cheeks. Mr. Daly was sobbing.

"I shall have to ask you all to leave the room for a few minutes," said the priest, and as they filed out, he put on his sacred stole, and blessed the boy. Then bending over him, he heard Bill's confession.

Bill told him everything. He wanted to go into details, but the priest, to whom a single word meant volumes, quieted him and allowed him to say only what was absolutely necessary. When his confession was made, the priest took out a crucifix and pointing to it, said, "He came for us, for us who offended Him. He is more glad to forgive you than you are to receive forgiveness. Make your act of contrition, and I shall pronounce God's absolution. Speak from your heart as to Christ on the Cross. He sees your repentance. He will heal you and make you His dear child."

As the dying lad was saying his words of sorrow for sin, the priest was pronouncing absolution. "May Almighty God have mercy

on you and forgive you your sins and bring you to life everlasting. Amen. May the Almighty and Merciful Lord grant you pardon, absolution and remission of all your sins. Amen. May Our Lord Jesus Christ absolve you, and I, by His Authority, do absolve you from every stain of sin. I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. May the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the merits of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of all the Saints, whatever good you have done and whatever suffering you have borne, make for the forgiveness of your sins, for an increase of grace, and for the reward of life eternal. Amen."

Father Boone arose, opened the door and bade all come in. "All please kneel down," he said, "I am going to give William, Holy Viaticum." They all knelt, including Mr. Roberts. Before the priest administered the sacred rite, he turned to the boy and said,

"My child, I am bringing to you Our Lord Himself, to be your friend and companion. Speak your heart to Him." Then administering the Blessed Sacrament, he said,

"Receive, my child, the Holy Viaticum, the

Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ. May He guard you against the evil one and conduct you to life everlasting. Amen."

The boy received the Sacred Host with intense reverence and joy. He crossed his arms in prayer. After a short while, he turned to his mother and said, "God wants me, mother."

She responded, "The Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

The father came over to his son, and taking his hand kissed it, saying with a voice of suppressed emotion, "Good-bye, Willie, pray for your poor old Dad."

"Good-bye, Dad. A kiss."

His eyes caught Frank kneeling beside the bed and he faintly smiled at him.

Then, to his mother, "Good-bye, Ma."

She kissed his forehead tenderly. He looked up a moment, and closed his eyes. Father Boone and Frank were just saying, "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death," when the mother gave a gasp and said, "My Willie is dead!"

(V)

On the way home an hour later, Frank and the priest walked for a while in silence. Each had his own thoughts. In an indefinable way, the priest showed a marked respect for the boy. He understood all now, "A truly noble boy," he kept saying to himself. But Frank occupied only a part of his thoughts. The mysterious ways of God's Providence furnished him food for reflection. "A soul saved, a life lost," he said to himself, as he considered the reform of Mr. Daly and the death of Bill.

Frank, too, had his thoughts. His tired head was full of all he had seen and heard of Bill's life and family. Bill was a "victim of circumstances." "What if my father had been like his?" he asked himself. "I have never thanked God enough for my good father and mother." Then he was glad both for Bill's sake and for his own that Bill had gone to confession. In his own relief at knowing that the strain of misunderstanding was ended for both himself and Father Boone, he expected the priest momentarily, to refer to the subject. When they had gone a distance in silence, Frank burst out—the first words between them since leaving the hospital.

"Father, you know all about it now!"

"All about what, Frank?"

"Why, didn't he tell you . . . about the . . ." here he stopped. The priest gave him a look that startled him. "O, I beg your pardon, Father, I forgot it was confessional."

From that moment the subject never came up again. But Frank knew in his heart that he was cleared. It would not matter now, no matter what happened. The subject never came up again, but in a thousand ways, from that night on, Frank realized that Father Boone was his dearest and best friend.

Switching the conversation, Father Boone said, "Our prayers for Daly tomorrow will be for his welfare beyond, not here."

"It will be a great shock to the fellows, Father," said Frank.

"Yes, doubtless. Death always is. And the death of a boy especially."

"Why, Father?"

"Well, I suppose because we don't expect the young to die. It seems out of place. But God calls at all hours. After all, it's only a question of a few years, more or less. We all go sooner or later. The great thing is not the going, but the manner of it—to live in such

a way that whenever God calls, we are ready. Then, it's all one,—for compared with eternity, the longest life is but a fraction of a second. Not even that."

They soon reached the rectory. "Good-bye, Frank, my good boy Frank," and the priest gave him a hand shake that almost made him yell.

"Good-bye, Father."

And when in later years Frank recalled that night, he marvelled that one small boy could have been both so sad and so happy.

Chapter VI

The Cost of Honor

The next morning at about ten, Father Boone was in his office at the Club, waiting for Mr. Roberts, who had phoned him asking for an appointment.

"This has been a crowded week," said the priest to himself. "On Monday morning I found the Club rooms a wreck. Since then, we have had a fire, Bill Daly's adventure and death, all the worry over the mystery and, thank God, its solution.

"All cleared up now. And out of it comes Frank Mulvy, pure gold. He had a hard ordeal, poor boy. I was certainly severe on him. But under the same circumstances, yes, I'd do the same again. What a *mirage* life is! We see or fancy we see, so many things that are not there."

Presently, Mr. Roberts was shown in, and after the usual greeting, he said, "I know you

are busy, Father, and so I won't take up much of your time. You know I had intended putting William Daly through school, but that's off now."

"Yes," interrupted Father Boone, "he knows more now than all the colleges could impart."

"Say, Father Boone, do you know it's taken my breath away—the way you people look at things. You talk and feel about the other world as we do about this! Why, last night, everybody seemed to be right next door to God."

"That's our Faith," replied the priest. "It's our greatest treasure, the best thing we have in life. That is, for those of us who live up to it."

"It must be so, Father. I couldn't help but notice how happy that boy looked after the Sacraments. But, I came on another matter today. William Daly is dead. What I was going to do for him I want to do for some other whom you will designate. Preferably, that young lad who was with you last night. But I leave it to you."

"God will bless you for that. But Frank Mulvy comes of a well-to-do family. He is one of the finest lads that God ever made.

He intends going to college after finishing at our high school. I have another boy, however, very deserving and very poor. If you will consent, I should like to designate him. His name is Edward Morgan."

"Edward Morgan it shall be," replied Mr. Roberts.

"Now, another thing, Father. I have told Mrs. Daly to have as nice a funeral as possible for her boy. That's not an act of kindness, but of justice. He saved my wife and child. I shudder when I think what life would be without them. All my money would be nothing, with them gone. Of course I shall take good care of Mr. Daly," he added.

"I am sure you are doing the part of a good and grateful man," said Father Boone.

"And another little thing, Father. We are close on to Christmas. I want to do something for you personally, for yourself, do you understand?"

"I thank you very much," said the priest, "but, really, I prefer to have you help some one else."

"No, it must be you, Father. I am set. I want to do something to please you, personally."

"O, you do! Well now, I'll tell you how you may do that. I have any number of poor people in the parish. Some need clothing, some food, some rent. Suppose you help me to help them?"

"I'll go the limit, Father, I have the money. You send me word how much you need, and you will have it."

"Not so fast, my good man. I only want you to help to a certain extent. You know we have many poor. I could easily ask you for a large sum and not half supply our needs. Just how much do you wish to give?"

"How much do you want?"

"Well, I have at least thirty poor families on my list."

"Suppose, then," said Mr. Roberts, "that we make it a hundred dollars to each family. How would that suit?"

Father Boone felt like calling for help. Three thousand dollars! It almost toppled him over. "Suit!" he exclaimed, "why, it will be royal! Rather, let me say, it will be very Christian, Christlike."

"It's done," said Mr. Roberts.

"I thank you," said Father Boone earnestly.

"I thank *you*," replied the millionaire.

Then he continued: "I see you are doing a lot here for the boys. That is the best work I know of. If you turn out others like Frank and William, you ought to be blessed and thanked. I know your heart is with your boys. Can't I do something for the Club?"

They talked over the situation for some time, with the result that the Club was to get a new piano, new up-to-date billiard tables, a bowling alley, and six sets of boxing gloves. All these were to be delivered Christmas week.

As Mr. Roberts was leaving, the priest said, "It's my turn now to do something for you. I am going to ask you to do a little favor for yourself. I want you to kneel down every night before going to bed and say a prayer. It's not a long one, just this: 'O God, grant me the grace to see the light, and the courage to follow it.' "

"Why, that's easy," said Mr. Roberts. "I thought you were going to ask me something big."

"Well, for all you know, that may turn out to be the biggest thing you have ever done," replied Father Boone, as they clasped hands on parting.

Father Boone's thoughts just now had turned to the McCormack concert. After the disturbance, he had sent the tickets to a priest down town, who had a boys' club in a poor section of the city. "But I don't know as it's too bad," he thought. "Those boys down there never get much of anything. I'll find some way to make it up. The boys won't suffer for my mistake, that's certain."

He phoned down to Carnegie Hall.

"Sold out," was the answer.

"I thought so," he reflected, not at all disappointed.

That afternoon while down town on business, he turned over 57th Street to Seventh Avenue and dropped into Carnegie Hall to see what other date McCormack was booked for. While he was making his inquiries, a man standing nearby approached him.

"Pardon, Father, you're from St. Leonard's? I am Mr. McCormack's manager; perhaps I can help you out." When he heard that ninety seats were wanted, he almost collapsed, "But your boys are little chaps, aren't they, Father, from nine to fifteen? Lads of that age don't take up much room. How would you like to have them seated on the stage?"

"Why, that's capital," exclaimed Father Boone.

"Well, I can manage that. We'll give them the first row on either side. That will put them right close to McCormack while he's singing. I know how kids like to be near to what's going on."

So it was all arranged, and Father Boone returned home very happy. He had received that very morning a letter from one of the parishioners who always gave him something for the Club at Christmas. This time it was a check for $150.00. The tickets cost him $90.00. "With the rest," he mused, "I shall be able to give them a good time."

(II)

That evening the boys were rather subdued. Bill Daly's death had affected them greatly. To be playing with a lad on Monday, and to know he is dead on Friday, is a terrible shock to boys.

As Father Boone entered the Club he observed how serious they were. It was natural, he reflected, and best to let it work itself out. He would not mention the McCormack treat just now.

The boys gathered around him, and asked all sorts of questions about Bill's last moments. Even to these lads it meant something consoling that he had died a beautiful Catholic death. They told Father Boone that they had gone to Mass in a body that morning, and had received Holy Communion for Bill's soul.

"I offered up the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for William this morning," said the priest, "and I suggest that on the day of the funeral you all go to Communion again in a body for the repose of his soul."

"We had already decided on that, Father," said Dick.

"That is good," remarked the priest, "and now another thing. You know his mother is terribly broken up by her boy's death. That is natural. She would not be a mother otherwise. Of course, she is resigned to God's will. So was Our Blessed Mother, at the foot of the Cross, but that did not prevent her heart from being pierced with grief. Mrs. Daly was very brave under it all. So much so that Mr. Roberts, who was there, said to me afterwards, "Your religion is a wonderful thing in affliction." But, boys, she feels the separation

keenly. William was a remarkably good boy to his mother. Now that he is dead, I can say to you that the poor boy had an awful lot to contend with, and if it were not for his religion and his mother, no one can say how he might have turned out.

"Now I suggest, boys, that you divide up, and some of you go over to the house at one time, and some at another, on a visit of condolence."

"Yes, Father," said Tommy. "We were thinking about going over."

"What's the best thing to say to her, Father, if we want to show our sympathy?" asked Dick.

"Nothing," replied the priest. "Words are useless in deep sorrow. Just go there quietly. Your mere presence will say more than any words, if your behavior is considerate."

"Shouldn't we say anything at all?" asked Ned.

"Just a word or two to say who you are, and that you are sorry for her. Your presence is what will talk most."

It was after ten o'clock that evening when Father Boone reached the Daly flat. He had been stopped several times on his way over,

by inquiries about the Club, and Daly. On entering he found six of the Club boys kneeling around the body saying the rosary. The lads had held a meeting after Father Boone had left them, and decided to go in groups of six, each group to stay a half hour. They also decided that the best way they could show their sympathy for the parents, and to aid Bill, was to say the beads.

In order not to disturb them, Father Boone went quietly into the rear room. Some one told Mrs. Daly that the priest was come, and she went to him at once. As soon as she saw Father Boone, she broke down. The priest had expected it. He had seen less devoted mothers become hysterical under such circumstance. He simply said nothing. He let her have her cry out. When it was over, he remarked, "That's good now; that cry will do you good." He spoke kindly, but very firmly. He knew that one little exhibition of his own feelings would start her all over again.

When she was composed, she said, "O, but Father, what lovely boys you have at the Club! Sure, they came in here in droves all the evening, and every one of them knelt

down and said the rosary for Willie. It did my heart good. Forgive me, Father, for the cry I had. They gave me so much comfort, I thought I was altogether resigned to God's blessed will. But the sight of you, Father, brought the tears."

"Well, I am not surprised at that, my good woman. Did not our Lord have tears of blood in Gethsemani? Yet He was resigned. The end of His prayer was, 'Not my will, but Thine be done.' If we did not feel these things keenly, there would be little merit in being resigned to God's will."

"God bless you, Father, for saying that. I was afraid I was rebellious."

"Not at all. You were only human, only a mother."

Again she started to cry, and the priest sat silent.

After a moment he said, "And now, Mrs. Daly, remember that by offering up your sorrow to God for Willie, it becomes something precious in the sight of heaven, and will benefit his soul."

"Thank you, Father, I'll do like you say. But Father, you should see himself. I never thought he would take it so hard."

"Where is he?"

"Inside."

"Tell him to come here."

In a moment Mr. Daly came in. There were no signs of tears on his face, just a drawn, sad expression. His eyes were sunken and dull. He began first.

"O Father, it's the hand of God on me and I deserve it. If the home was what it should be, it never would have come to this."

"Well, Michael, if it's the hand of God, and it is, it is for your good. The hand of God will never lead you away from your true welfare."

"But it's the Missus I'm thinking about, Father. It will kill her. I can stand it. But she can't. Oh, if the good God had taken me instead!" He sighed heavily. "Of course, I feel Willie's going, too, almost as much as the mother, for I had just found him again. All these years he was lost to me, and mine the fault, the crime I should say, and it is God that is punishing me."

"I believe it, Michael. And He is punishing you here rather than hereafter. But His chastisements are different from men's. He draws good from His punishments. This will make a man of you, and you will save your

soul. It brings God and His judgments before you. It shows you that we never know when He may call us, and that we should all be ready. Suppose He had called you suddenly two weeks ago, where would you be now?"

Michael said not a word. He just bowed his head.

Father Boone continued, "Be a man, Michael. Take your sorrow as chastisement from God. You deserve it, as you know. You did not appreciate the child God gave you, and He took him. Live now as a good man and husband. Don't worry over the Missus. Her faith will take care of her."

While he was speaking, Mrs. Daly came in. Turning to her, he said, "Mrs. Daly, I feel sorry for you and Michael, but I do not feel sorry for the boy. Willie is now with God. He died the way Christ wants His followers to die. He is with God now. He would not exchange places with the most fortunate person in this world. He would not come back again if he could. God grant that you and I may finish our journey to eternity as acceptably as he has done!"

"Blessed be the holy will of God," responded the mother.

"Amen," said Michael.

"Now I am proud of you," declared the priest. "Your sorrow is great, but like true followers of Christ you carry your cross after Him. That is why He had His way of the Cross, so that when we have ours, we shall not be alone. Come into the front room and let us say a prayer for Willie's soul."

As they entered, the friends sitting around stood up. The six lads saying the beads continued their prayers, but on seeing Father Boone, they terminated the rosary at the decade they were saying.

When all was silence, the priest spoke out, "My dear people, let us all say the 'Our Father' for the repose of William's soul. When we come to 'Thy Will be done,' we shall pause for a moment, and dwell particularly on those words. All please kneel."

He began: "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Amen. Our Father....who art in heaven....hallowed be Thy name....Thy kingdom come....THY.... WILL....BE DONE....on earth....as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.... and forgive us our trespasses....as we forgive those....who trespass against us....and lead us

not into temptation....but deliver us from evil....Amen. May Willie's soul, and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God rest in peace. Amen."

He rose from his knees and quickly and quietly left the room. The boys soon followed, for it was late. One by one the others left, and the father and mother were alone with their dead. They sat silent for a long time. Then Mrs. Daly touched her husband's arm and said, "Michael, let us kneel down and say the 'Our Father,' the way Father Boone did."

Chapter VII

Knighted

The day after the funeral of Bill Daly, Frank was on his way down to school when he met Dick and Ned.

"I say, Frank," began Dick, "don't you think you better do something about that Club row?"

"There's nothing to be done, as far as I can see, Dick."

"That's because you're not hearing what we hear. But it won't be long before you get it, too. It's just got to us, because they know we're friends of yours."

"Well, in the name of Sam Hill, what is it you hear?" asked Frank.

"Want it straight?" asked Ned. "The word's round that the Club is going to be disbanded, and that you're the cause of it. I almost got into a fight with the first guy that told me."

"Yes," added Dick, "and they say that the best fellows are getting out on account of you."

"Where did you get that?" asked Frank.

"Some one saw three or four of the fellows' mothers coming from the rectory the last few days, and one of them asked Joe Rooney if his mother was going to let him stay in the Club. You know Joe's father keeps a store on 42nd Street and is somebody. Well, Joe is true blue even if he is a dude, and he said, 'Why shouldn't I stay in the Club?' She said, 'Oh, I thought all the decent boys had left. I can't have my boy ever put his foot in that place again, with that pack of rowdies.' "

This was news for Frank, but to their surprise he showed little concern.

"Don't you see, Hank," said Dick, "that you are getting in bad. If a lot of mud is thrown, some will stick. It's easy to give a fellow a bad name, but it's hard to get rid of it. Why don't you do something? I am sure Father Boone also will get a lot of annoyance from it, unless you clear yourself."

But Frank did not seem to mind. It was so unlike him that Ned said, "If we didn't know

you so well, Frank, we'd think you were mixed up in it ourselves."

"Yes," declared Dick, "to one on the outside it looks bad for you. That Dunn kid told everybody that you were over to see his father and then someone else blabbed what happened in the Club, that you owned up to knowing all about it. Putting two and two together, they have built up an ugly story, and it's spread like fire."

That's all right, fellows," replied Frank nonchalantly, as they parted at the school. But just the same Frank was doing a lot of thinking. "Suppose the decent fellows should leave the Club! Suppose it got a rowdy name!

"But," he went on, "Father Boone knows how things are, and he'll straighten them out. But can he? What he knows, he does not know, for all intents and purposes. He can't use what he got in confession, and that's all he got. He may know that I am right. That settles something. But how about my mother, and the others?"

These reflections came to Frank as he was going upstairs to his class room. It was a relief to know that his teacher had some confidence in him. Some of the boys gave him sly

looks and one or two made insinuations. At recess, however, he met his real ordeal. First one, then two, and at length a dozen or more had gathered around him.

"Well, fellows, you are getting a good show, I hope," laughed Frank, with a forced grin. As they kept on staring he added, in a tone trying to be pleasant, "Movies free today."

Outside the circle someone called, "What's up over there?"

The reply cut him through and through. "That's the goody-good kid that got caught in the roughneck stuff over at the Club."

If a thrust were made designedly in order to inflict exquisite pain, it could not have served the purpose better. Frank moved off with hot iron in his very flesh. He knew that the last word in contempt among boys was that same "goody-good." It implied everything that he detested. With the boys it meant a girlish goodness, a sort of "softy." That hurt him. Of course, in a school where there were nearly a thousand boys, he was known only to his own set. He was not thinking of them, but of the great crowd who knew him but slightly, and who would credit what they heard. And out over the whole yard had

rung those words, "goody-good!" And on the top of that, to be called a "roughneck!"

In class the next hour, the recess and its every incident occupied Frank's whole mind. Every word and look was rehearsed over and over again. He was called on for recitation, but his name had to be repeated before he responded. When he did reply, he appeared like one just out of a trance. The hour of class seemed very long.

At noon, he delayed going out in order not to face the crowd. When he thought that most of the boys had gone, he went out into the street. His face was burning. He fancied everyone he met was looking at him. He could almost hear passersby say "goody-good" and "roughneck."

If Frank had been "just any boy," the experience of the recess hour would not have caused him such exquisite anguish. But a boy of high honor resents with all his soul the insinuation that he appears one thing, while in reality he is another. "But why," he reflected, almost aloud, "why should I carry a load that is not mine? I did not ask Daly's confidence. Why should I suffer for it?" He knew the answer, at once. Honor demanded

it, and honor's price at times comes high. That is what makes its value. But the thing kept coming back. It would not let him alone. When apparently settled, it came again in a new form.

"Daly is gone," he reflected. "He hasn't got to face a crowd and bear their jeers and insults. I kept this secret as long as it could possibly hurt him any. Now, what's the harm in clearing myself?"

This thought clung to him like a wet garment. It looked right, but his fine sense of honor detected the wrong that lurked in it.

"Yes," he said, "Daly is gone, but his father and mother are here. What a blow it would be to them!"

But back again came the temptation, were his own father and mother not to be considered also? Did he not owe more to them than to Bill Daly's parents? And so he went on, balancing duty with duty. Yes, it certainly was right for him to clear himself. This conclusion, however, did not satisfy him either.

"Two things are against it," he mused. "First, any crook can accuse the silent dead. I am free of guilt, but I must not establish my innocence by making the dead guilty.

Moreover, who would believe me? They'd all say that a fellow mean enough to wreck a club room, would be mean enough to lie. It wouldn't do me any good to speak out.

"And then—Bill Daly's death made a profound impression on everybody. Father Boone's sermon at the funeral was as good as a mission. All that would be undone if I let out on Daly. I can live this thing down, he can't. Should I, even because of the pain of this thing to myself and my father and mother, break up all that? No. Not even if I was sure it would help my case. I know I am right with God. That counts most. If I am doing something for Him, I must do it right. No whining, nor complaining, nor getting amazed that I am ill-treated. All that goes with the sacrifice."

He entered the church and went to the altar of the Sacred Heart. "O my God, for the love of Thee, I do this. I offer Thee a bleeding heart. It costs me much, but I am glad to give Thee what does cost so much. And, my dear Lord, grant me the grace to give cheerfully what I give. Amen."

He arose and went out, strong and buoyant, like the martyrs who went to the lions re-

joicing. "A soldier fights for the flag," he thought, "and does so with enthusiasm, although he may meet with wounds, capture and death. I must fight under the standard of the Cross, and be a brave soldier of Christ, a Knight of the Cross."

There was no school that afternoon and so he took his time getting home. On his way, he was met by Mrs. Joyce, mother of one of the Club members.

"Aren't you that Mulvy boy?" she asked.

"Yes, Mrs. Joyce," he replied.

"I thought so," she continued. "Well, you've been found out at last."

That was all. It was a terrible lot for Frank's sensitive soul, but he said in his heart, "For Thee, Jesus," and went bravely on. At home, a new trial was awaiting him. His mother had been stopped on the street several times this morning, and had received very pointed inquiries about her boy. The last woman who addressed her had virtually insulted her.

"Well, Mrs. Mulvy, it's too bad. Who would have thought that your boy, Frank, would turn out so bad!"

Mrs. Mulvy had to make an effort to smile

and not reply. But when she got home, she found that she had bit her lips even to blood.

When Frank came in, doubly dear to her now, she almost lost control of herself. She sank with a groan into the large arm chair. Frank was at her side in a second, smothering her with kisses, and breathing out terms of endearment to her. In a moment, she was herself again.

"Excuse me, Frank," she said, "I was all undone. But tell mother, dear, what in the world have you done?"

Frank was brave for himself. But where his mother was concerned, it was different. He knew now that what he had promised at the altar was going to cost him much dearer even than he had calculated. He was strongly tempted to make an exception in his mother's case, and to tell her all. But he remembered his promise at the altar and how Bill himself had said, "There's no going back on a promise to Him."

"A soldier does not quit when he gets a blow, neither will I," he reflected. "This blow is worse, because it strikes me through my mother, but I will trust God, and do what I have promised Him. Moreover, if mother

could not trust me now, when I tell her I am blameless, would it do any good to tell her the dime-novel truth of the matter?"

Looking deep into her eyes, he said, "Mother, you never knew me to deceive you. You must trust me now more than ever. But I will tell you more than I shall say to any other human being. Mother, there is a mistake. Everything points to me, I know. I'm under this cloud because I would not be untrue to a confidence. I've just left the church, where I promised God to carry this cross for Him. I was thinking of you when I made that offering. Now, Mother, won't you be good and not worry any more?"

For an answer she embraced him, and taking him by the hand, she led the way to the little oratory. They knelt down before the Sacred Heart, and still holding his hand in her's, she said, "Dear Sacred Heart, I add my offering to my boy's. Do thou keep him ever in Thy love and Thy Grace. Amen."

"It's all right now, mother. The cross has lost its weight."

"Yes, dear," she answered, "we won't mind anything now. I'll tell your father that

I know things are all right, so he won't be embarrassed by any gossip he hears."

"Mother, I'd rather you wouldn't say anything to father. He has enough to worry him without our cares."

"Yes, dear, things don't always run smoothly with him, yet he spares us his worries. I'll do as you say, unless something makes me see it's best to tell him."

(II)

After lunch, Frank went out to the football field. There was to be heavy practice that afternoon for the big game of the year. On his way, he met Dick and Ned, headed in the same direction.

"O Frank," exclaimed Ned, "you're being terribly 'roasted' all over the parish. Somehow the thing is getting bigger and bigger, and you're made out worse and worse."

"Can't help people talking, son," was Frank's reply.

"I know, Hank, but it's something awful. Why don't you do something?"

"I'm open to suggestions, wise one. What do you advise me to do?"

"Why, deny it!"

"I have."

"Well, tell them that you can prove you didn't do it. Show 'em that you were not around there when it happened."

"That's just it. Who knows when it happened?"

"Well, isn't there anything you can do? It's fierce to get the rep you're getting."

"Search me, kid. I don't know anything more that I can do."

As they approached the field, they found most of the players already on hand, in their uniforms. Subs were beginning to line up against the regulars, for the practice, but Frank noticed at a glance that John Derby, of the second team, was in a regular uniform.

"Oho," he thought, "that looks strange. And that uniform looks suspiciously like mine!" His heart sank.

Of all things that Frank liked, football came first. In the last game, with Grayson High, his playing had certainly counted big in winning the game for Regal. He was the only boy from his year on the team but no one could run and dodge as fast. His grit helped, too, for he would fight on, no matter how rough he was handled. In the early fall, he

had been carried off the field protesting, although he was terribly bruised. Considering all this, it seemed impossible that Derby had been promoted to his uniform on the eve of their biggest game. Tomorrow they were to play Stanley High for the Interscholastic championship.

However, he hurried, with as much coolness as possible, to the dressing room. He found his locker empty. Standing nearby was the captain of the team, Robert Fitzpatrick.

"What does this mean, Bob?" said Frank, quietly.

"Didn't they tell you, Mulvy?"

"Tell me what?"

"That you're off."

"Why, no. This is the first notion I've had of it. I came out for practice."

"Well, I'd rather someone else told you, Mulvy. I just want to say we had a hot row over you. I stood up for you, but four of the players said they'd resign unless you were dropped. So I had to give in, or 'bust' the team."

"What's the charge against me, Bob?"

"Don't you know?"

"No, I don't."

"Well, you ought to."

"I know the report that's around," said Frank, "but you fellows certainly don't want to go on record for condemning a man before he's heard?"

"Why, they said you admitted it."

"That's not so. I said I knew about it. I did not need to say that. I had my knowledge as a confidence, and I could have denied all knowledge of it. But because I had the spunk to speak out as I did, you fellows brand me. It's all right. I'll take my medicine."

"It wasn't easy for us to drop you, Mulvy. Tomorrow is the big game, and we need our best team. I put that before them strong. But I was out-voted."

"Well, Bob, I want to thank you for what you did. But tell me one thing. You know how the fellows move heaven and earth to get a strong team. You know how, when a fellow got into a scrape, or was behind in studies, or even if he was bounced, all the others stood by him and fought to retain him. Now, I know I'm a boob, but nevertheless, I know my worth to the team, and so do you. Tell me, then, why this action in my regard?"

"Well, I'll be frank with you, Mulvy. They look upon this matter differently. From all accounts, it was a thug affair, and it's gotten all over the parish. The fellows won't stand for it, not even if it hurts our chances for tomorrow's game."

"Thank you, Bob, for being so frank. Now, another question. It's my last, don't be afraid to be candid. Do you think the same as the others?" For a moment there was no reply.

"O, excuse me," said Frank, "I did not mean to embarrass you. Please don't answer."

Turning, he saw five or six of the team standing about. They had all heard the conversation. Not one had come forward to befriend him.

"It's all right, fellows, I have no kick. I'm in bad. But I hope you'll find out some day that I'm misrepresented."

So saying, he walked away, down-hearted, but full of exultation. He was paying a high price for that offering to the Sacred Heart. It hurt. But he was glad that he was doing something worth while for God.

He left the field. He could not bear to stay and look on. He had not gone far when Dick and Ned overtook him. "Say, fellows, don't

mind me," he said to them. "Go back and take in the sport."

"Not without you," said Dick.

At the same time, Ned put his hand in his, but said nothing.

Frank's eyes filled. Here was trust. Here was devotion. They walked along for five minutes, not a word being spoken. Rather, many words were uttered, but they were the silent language of the heart.

"I think I'll see Father Boone," Frank said eventually. "I want to get his advice on something. Good-bye fellows. I'll never forget how true you were to me." And he headed off in the direction of the Club, hoping to find the priest in his office there.

(III)

Father Boone was in and he was very serious, as it was easy to see from his face and manner. For he had just heard how his boy, Frank, was being treated.

"Of course," he meditated, "my lips are sealed. All that I know is confessional. But I must think out some way of coming to Frank's rescue. What a chivalrous lad he is! What a fine sense of honor! He'll see it

through, no matter what the cost. I trust that most of my boys would suffer anything rather than lie or do wrong. But this is heroic. It shows fine mettle. His religion is his strength.

"But can I allow him to be a victim of injustice? Daly knew the secrecy of the confessional but, at the same time, I told him that I could not give him absolution unless he repaired the wrong he did, as far as lay in his power. The only thing in his power then, was to give me permission to use what he told me. I told him plainly that someone else was under suspicion of the deed. I pointed out that in case that one were in danger of incurring the guilt and punishment, it was a matter of justice on his part to assume the responsibility of the act.

"Of course he gave me the authorization to declare that he and he alone was the author of the damage. He even begged me to do it, for his peace of soul and as penance for his sins. He showed he had the right disposition for absolution. But it's not all right for me. He was too weak to sign a paper and if I were to use the knowledge I have, what would prevent people from saying that I was violating the sacred seal? My word alone

could be questioned by anyone. A slur on the confessional would result, and untold harm would be done.

"But here I am discussing the matter, as though it were open to discussion. No, I was just ruminating. My lips are sealed forever."

Just then there was a rap at the door, and in came Frank. The priest arising said, "God bless you, Frank." They stood and looked at each other for a moment. Father Boone extended his hand. Frank clasped it. They understood.

Then Frank unburdened himself to the priest. He told him all the snubs he got, and finally came to the football matter.

"That got me. You see, Father, they are a square set of fellows. To take such action right before the big game means that they have me down bad. I don't blame them. I told them I had no kick. But, gee whiz, it hurts!"

"Of course it hurts, boy, but don't you suppose it hurts when a soldier goes over the top and gets a bayonet in his breast? Or when he gets gassed, or bombed? Perhaps you think it's fun for an aviator to see his machine crippled four thousand feet above ground and to know he is dashing to death? They do all

that for flag, for country, for glory. We ought to do our bit for God and our country above."

"Father, you've got a way of explaining everything. I think if I had you around, I could go through life as if it were a picnic."

"It's not much of a picnic, son; and I could tell you some things worse than going over the top."

"For instance?" suggested Frank.

"Well, wouldn't you like to know now, Frankie boy? But you won't. No, it is enough that God sees and knows. He who has Him for witness has enough."

"But what do you advise me to do about this football business, Father?"

"There's nothing to advise. All I can say is 'watchful waiting.' But I can tell you this. I have never yet known that a fellow who does what is right, loses out. He may appear for a time to have the worst of it, and he may suffer a lot, but if he does what is right to the end, he comes out on top. The trouble is that most people are willing to do right for a limited period, and then they give way. That always loses. If God is to be trusted, it is not for a day or a week, but always. I don't mean to say that every good man has

been justified before men, but this I do say, that no good man has ever regretted his trust in God, nor the price he paid for it."

"I feel now that I can stand anything, Father."

"That's the way to talk. Just act the same way."

Frank went into the reading room and glanced over the magazines. He took down some books and looked them over. The Club rooms were practically empty and his mind was not on his reading. It was the matter of football practice and how the new player would do that chiefly recurred to him. After about an hour and a half, as it was getting dark, he put away his book and started for home.

At Gody's corner, there was usually a crowd of the Regal boys at this hour, and Frank hesitated whether he would pass along that way or go around the block. He had had enough troubles for one day, and did not court any more. To pass that crowd would mean trouble of some sort, he was afraid. But suddenly he wheeled around. "I'll go the way I would in case nothing was up. If I once give in to this thing, it will be my finish."

He accordingly walked towards the crowd. As they saw him coming, he caught their looks and nods in his direction. When he got alongside of them, George Mooney, an upper class boy, said sneeringly, "Why weren't you out to the practice, Mulvy?"

Frank took all the wind out of his sails by answering, "I was out there, but they fired me. They had no room on the team for a thug, they told me."

"Some sand, kid," said Fred Gaffney. "You don't look like a fellow who'd do a dirty trick."

"He has already done it, there's no question of what he would do," retorted Mooney.

"Come here, kid," said Gaffney. "I'm going to believe just what you say. Did you have anything to do with that damage over there?"

In a clear, straightforward manner, Frank said, "No." And he looked Gaffney right in the eye.

Gaffney, who was the biggest fellow in the crowd, turned to the others and said, "Fellows, I'm not looking for a fight, nor am I going to run away from one. I'm going to stand by this kid. Not that I think he needs

anyone to brace him up. He is well able to take care of himself. But I'm going to stand by him because I think fair play demands it. What's got into you fellows. Doesn't a chap's record count for anything? Hasn't Mulvy's record always been good? If a fellow is white all along, is he going to turn yellow over night? Put on your thinking caps."

Frank's eyes were riveted on him, and they were moist. Gaffney saw it. "Put out your hand, kid. You're good enough for me," he said.

"And for me." "And for me," others echoed, for Gaffney was a leader.

"I thank you, fellows, and you particularly, Gaffney," said Frank, as he moved along. His steps seemed lighter. Gaffney, a real leader as well as cheer leader for the games, believed in him. Perhaps the thing would blow over. Some others might put on their thinking caps also. He hoped so.

When he got near his own street, he ran into Dick, who had just met some of the fellows who had been at the practice.

"I say, Hank," he began, "they had hot work up at the field. Bully practice. The new guy is going fine, they say."

"Were you up?"

"No, but I got it from Fitzpatrick and Redmond, who were there all the afternoon."

"I don't see how he could jump in on such short notice, and fill the place. But if he does, so much the better."

"Will you be out at the game tomorrow?" asked Dick.

"No, I don't see how I could stand it," replied Frank.

(IV)

It broke clear and bracing next morning. It was football weather made to order. Everybody was discussing the game. Stanley High and Regal had even scores for the season. They were tied for the championship, and this game was to decide it. In the morning, the boys got together at the school to rehearse their cheers and songs. Gaffney was cheer leader. By the time they had finished they were worked up to a high pitch of excitement.

Louis Holten walked up to Gaffney at the close and said, "We've got 'em licked, surely, Gaff."

"Not so fast, boy. Stanley has something to say about that."

"Yep, Stanley's record is first class all right, but you should have seen our bunch at it yesterday. Nothing can stop them!"

"I hope so, Holten, but I'd feel better if Mulvy were on the job."

"Mulvy! Why the fellow that takes his place has him beaten a mile. Besides, the fellows wouldn't play with that thug on the team."

"I wish there were more thugs like him, old man, that's my 'think.' And besides it's a big mistake to put a new man in at the last moment."

"Not if he's as good as this new man."

"O, I saw him yesterday, and I tell you Louie, Mulvy entirely outclasses him. Derby is big and strong, but Mulvy has head and grit. And that's what counts."

"Well, we'll see, old chap; we'll be there with the yells."

"So long, Louie!"

"So long, Gaff!"

The crowd began to arrive at the field at one o'clock. The game was scheduled for 2:30. It was to be in four periods of fifteen minutes each. There was to be an interval of one minute between the quarters and of twenty

minutes between the halves. As many visitors were expected, some of whom would not know much about the teams or the game, the names of the teams and players were posted on a large board at one side of the field. Under the names were placed the scoring points, so that those unacquainted with the game would not have to show their ignorance.

"Touchdown.....6 points
Goal from touchdown.....1 point
Goal from field.....3 points
Safety.....2 points"

The connoisseurs of the game explained to the uninitiated just what a "touchdown" was, and a "goal from the field." It was harder to make clear what a "safety" meant. The general description seemed to be that it was when a player was caught with the ball behind his own goal.

The crowd kept coming in faster and faster as the hour approached. By two o'clock every bit of desirable space was occupied. The field was marked off with new lines which shone clear and bright. Stanley was grouped on the right, Regal on the left, the side nearest the entrance. Automobiles fringed the outer crowd. All was expectancy.

Inside, the two teams were straining at the leash. The coaches had difficulty holding their men quiet.

"Don't waste your strength walking about and fretting," yelled Regal's coach. "You'll need all you've got out there." But the boys could not rest. They champed like horses at the post.

The cheers from outside came sailing in. That only increased their nervousness. A few minutes before time to go out, they almost needed to be tied. Every boy was chewing gum, or biting his nails, or kicking something. Finally the coach signalled attention.

"Now boys, go at them hard. This is no tea party. Scare them from the start. It's grit that wins. No quitter, no quarter. You're off."

With a yell, they bounded out of the dressing room and on to the field. They came out on a trot, looking steady and confident. They were greeted with "Regal, Regal! Rah, Rah, Regal," from thousands of throats. "Give them another," yelled Gaffney. "Regal, Regal! Rah, Rah, Re—gal" soared across the field.

An instant later, Stanley came out. They

got their welcome, "Stanley, Rah! Stanley, Rah!.....Rah! Rah! Stanley!"

The spectators were about equally divided. Both sides were on fire with enthusiasm. Those who knew the players pointed them out to those who did not. The strong and weak points of the respective teams were adverted to and discussed.

Below, on the gridiron, the players were limbering up. Some tossed the ball around, others made short sprints, while a few kicked the pig-skin, not far but accurately. The warning whistle sounded. Off came the heavy sweaters. Both sides ranged up in battle formation. The ball was propelled by a mighty kick far into Stanley's territory, and the fight was on.

The battle surged to and fro. Neither side showed any distinct superiority over the other. The ball was pushed now down to Stanley's goal, now down to Regal's. Either side, held for downs within the shadows of its own goal posts, invariably punted the ball back into hostile territory. Time and again an onward march was stopped by clever work and the ball changed hands. The game went on in this way for about ten minutes.

Suddenly from scrimmage, the ball was passed to Mulvy's substitute for a run forward. The chance was good for a score. A little clever dodging here and there would mean a touchdown and six points for Regal. The spectators rose to their feet, they stood on tip toe, they craned their necks to see the first score. All of a sudden, when within fifteen feet of goal, the runner was tackled, toppled, and the ball rolled into Stanley's possession. A groan came from Regal as Stanley picked up the ball, and carried it down the field, whence it was gradually worked over the line for a touchdown. They failed, however, to kick goal, and the score stood 6 to 0 in favor of Stanley.

No time was lost in renewing the battle, and soon it was on as fiercely as before. The Regal's coach was storming and stamping.

"I told them not to drop Mulvy," he bawled. "This is no dude's game. That sub has got no grit. Look at him now! He's got cold feet, he is only half playing. Here, Green, tighten up your belt. I'm going to put you in the next quarter."

The cheer leader was frantically appealing for encouragement from his yelling hordes.

They gave cheer after cheer, louder and longer. The encouragement was telling. Again Regal pushed the ball up the field. Again, a fine opening presented itself and Derby got the ball, and a good open track to the enemy goal. Deafening cheers gave him wings. Again a hostile player crossed his path and brought him down like a bag of oats. A hiss resounded over the field. The coach could hardly wait for the quarter to be up. Gaffney ran over from his cheering place to the bench, and whispered to him.

"I know it," growled the coach, "I told the bunch after yesterday's practice. He looked good to them, but I knew he wouldn't do. We're presenting the game to Stanley. It's their's without half trying. I'll put Green in the next quarter."

"Green is not your man either. There's just one way to save this game, and that's to get Mulvy."

"Is he here?" fairly yelled the coach.

"No, but there are lots of machines. We could run up to his place in five minutes. He could dress in the car and be here for the next half."

"It's no use, Gaff. He wouldn't come.

Don't talk to me. I know boys. After the deal he got yesterday, you couldn't get him here for a million dollars."

"I guess you're right, old man," assented Gaffney.

The first quarter was up with the ball close to Regal's line. The whistle saved further scoring. During the minute's rest it was clear that the Regal team were not dejected, but desperate. For a few seconds they simply looked at one another. The sub handicap was simply too much for them. They knew it was their own doing, and against the coach's advice.

"Here, Green, get in there now, and show the crowd that at least one fellow has grit."

The whistle sounded, the line-up was formed, and again the battle was on. They certainly played football. But they were up against a crowd who also played. The attack and defense continued as before. If Regal could not gain a point, neither could Stanley. On three or four occasions Regal might have scored, with Mulvy playing. They were afraid to risk anything with Green. They played safe. But that never wins. It may stop the enemy, but it will not bring victory. If the

enemy could hold what it had, the game was lost to Regal. The coach saw this. He also saw the solution.

"O, if I only had Mulvy," he roared. He stormed and stamped and said a lot beside his prayers. Gaffney was working like a Trojan. But it was no use. The battle was see-saw. Now Regal, now Stanley. Neither could break through. Again Gaffney came up to the coach. He was exhausted from cheering and from swinging his arms.

"I say, boss, it's all over, unless we get Mulvy."

"Don't talk to me or I'll eat you," snapped the coach. "What's the use of saying Mulvy when we haven't got Mulvy, and can't get him."

"Will you put him in if I get him?"

Just then a yell went up from the Stanley side. A long run brought the ball to within a few feet of Regal's goal, and a score looked certain. The coach was a sight. The veins in his forehead stood out. His eyes were bulging. All of a sudden, the Stanley player dropped the ball, and the Regal captain seized it. That saved that situation. The coach relaxed, but still looked like a house on fire.

Again Gaffney said, "If I get Mulvy will you put him in?"

"Ask me a foolish question, will you? Put him in! I'll shove him in, and poke him down the throats of that gang of quitters out there."

Gaffney went over to his crowd. "We've got to get Mulvy here, fellows," he shouted, "Unless we do, it's good night."

"Well, it's good night, then," remarked Tom Ruggeri, one of the upper class boys. Then he added, "You don't suppose any one would jump into the game after the dose he got yesterday, do you?"

"Not any one, but some one, and I believe Mulvy is just that some one," retorted Gaffney.

"Well, go ahead and get him then," was the rejoinder.

"You fellows don't know that boy. You have him down as a thug. I'm going to show you you're wrong."

He found Dick with Ned and Tommy. "Hey, Dick, you're a friend of Mulvy's. We want you to help us to get him here for the second half. Will you do it?"

"No, I will not," answered Dick. "He has

been humiliated enough already. To ask him now to play with a crowd that kicked him out yesterday is an insult."

"So, you won't come with me, kid?"

"No."

Gaffney went back to his crowd. "It's all up, I guess. Let's work like blazes cheering, that may start something."

Regal had the ball, but was pushed back to its own goal. In a mix-up, a Regal player ran back of his own goal line, and was grabbed for a "safety," which added two points to Stanley's score. There was dejection among the Regal players and consternation among their supporters.

Only three minutes of play remained before the end of the first half. The teams struggled doggedly. Regal was really playing splendidly, but the handicap of a sub player was too much. It seemed that Stanley just worked that one weak spot. That was good generalship on their part, but very trying on Regal. With but one minute more of play, Stanley got the ball and ran with it to within seven yards of Regal's goal. They lined up to push it through by sheer force. Regal made stout defense, and held the enemy wonderfully.

While the goal was still in imminent danger, the whistle blew, and the first half was over. Score, Stanley 8, Regal 0.

(V)

When Regal got to its quarters off the side line, the coach pitched into his men. "You bunch of babies, you ought to be playing croquet, not football! Where's your 'sand'? Haven't you got any spine?"

He was worked up to a terrible pitch. But it was all lost on the team. They were dazed. They had invited their friends to come out and see them win. And here they were pushed up and down the field, the score 8 to 0, and likely to be 28 to 0 before the end.

The captain was the first to speak. "If I'd had my way, it would now be 8 to 0 in our favor. I told you not to drop Mulvy. I told you not to believe that charge against him. But you had your way, and now you see what it's done."

"Do you suppose we could get him for the second half, Bob?" asked one of the team.

"What, after what we did to him? No."

Here Gaffney stepped up. "I say, fellows, it was a dirty, mean trick the way you fellows

turned on Mulvy. Bob is the only fellow that stood out for him."

"That's right, Gaff."

"Now I tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to show you that you're wrong on Mulvy. I'm going to get him. I'll go for him myself." He was off on the instant.

"If Mulvy comes here after our treatment of him yesterday, I'll take my hat off to him," declared Bob to his dejected team.

"If he comes," declared Bill Cronin, "I'll knock the head off the first fellow that ever dares hint again that he was in that thug affair."

That meant a good deal, for Cronin was the strongest man on the team.

"I guess we made a mistake, boys," said Joe Dalton. "As I look back now, I never knew Mulvy to be anything but straight."

"We believed that report too readily," observed Fred Donohue. "I'm mighty sorry for my part in it."

And so it went on. It stood out clearly now, that they had little or no ground for their action against Mulvy. But all felt that there was no question of his coming back.

Out on the field, the Stanley contingent was

jubilant. Songs and cheers rocked the stands. The Regal supporters tried to look hopeful, but not with any great success. There were many inquiries about Mulvy. Some gave one reason, some another, for his absence. Those in the parish gave the Club story. But the High School drew students from all over town, and the parish affairs were not known outside. The Stanley players were asking where Mulvy was, for they knew him and his record. They thought he was on the crippled list. Their chief concern was joy over the score, and the prospect of final victory, and the Interscholastic Championship.

Gaffney, meanwhile, had got a closed auto and had put into it a reserve uniform. It seemed the traffic cops took him for an ambulance—for he reached Frank's in five minutes. He rushed upstairs, rang the bell, breathing hard as he waited for the door to open.

Frank was with his mother and Father Boone within. The priest knew that Frank would feel it keenly that he was ostracized from the team, and being sure also that he would not go to the game, he had dropped in, casually, as it were, to see Mrs. Mulvy. Frank was really glad to see him.

"Do you know, Father," he said, after the casual remarks had all been made, "I've been building castles in the air. I was imagining that the game was hard fought, and that our fellows were getting the worst of it. Then I fancied they wished they had me with them, and that they sent for me. I scorned them and had my revenge!"

"That's quite a romance, Frank," said the priest. "But I guess the boys are winning. You know they said that that sub played splendidly yesterday."

"I hope they are winning, Father. I was just day-dreaming."

"But, Frank, suppose now that they did actually send for you, would you scorn them; would you refuse to go?"

"Well, Father, except for one thing. In church this morning, I offered this injustice to God as a sacrifice. If I should act resentfully, it would spoil the sacrifice."

"Now, you are talking as a Christian, as a Christian Knight. I'm proud of you. You see, in a case like this, you would not be obliged to go back to them. They ejected you. You are free to go back or not. But to go

back, not being obliged to, and to do so for the love of God, is virtue of a high order."

"You know, Father, Achilles went through something like this, and he scorned the pleading Greeks. But that was before Christ came."

"Precisely. And look at the nuns and priests of France. Banished from their country by an infidel government. Yet, when their country was in need of them they came back from all quarters of the globe to suffer and, if need be, die for her. That is the effect of Christ in the world."

"Yes, Father, and do you remember how differently Coriolanus acted? When he was driven out of Rome, although he was naturally a very noble man, he led an army against his countrymen for revenge."

"Why, you are quite a historian and philosopher, Frank."

At this point, the door bell rang and it was followed at once by excited knocking. Frank ran to the door and Gaffney rushed into the room, all out of breath. Without stopping to see who was there, he poured out his words in such haste and with such excitement, that he seemed almost beside himself.

"Mulvy, we're licked....the game is lost.... almost lost....They want you....They want you....Mulvy, they want you!"

Frank looked in amazement at Father Boone. The priest was a picture of astonishment.

"I've got a machine outside....the uniform in it....come along....the second half...."

Before he got any further, Frank looked understandingly at Father Boone, jumped to his feet, and was down stairs like a shot. Into the machine he rushed, then into the uniform. The car fairly flew along the avenue. By the time he had his uniform on and his shoes tied, the car was at the field. Only two minutes remained before the second half.

Bob saw Gaffney running towards the Regal squad, waving his hands, and shouting, "I've got him, I've got him."

And behind Gaffney, all in playing gear, was Mulvy. Bob let out a yell that was heard all over the field. Before he had time to tell the cause of his excitement and jubilation, Gaffney and Mulvy were in the midst of the squad.

The awkward situation lasted but a second.

"You're a brick, Mulvy," cried Bob, seizing his hand.

The signal rang for the second half. The coach rushed upon him. The boys jumped to their feet and made for the field, full of new life and courage. Each managed to fling him a greeting that told better than words that they knew they had been wrong and that they were sorry for what they had done.

"You're all right, old man."

"You're a whole crowd, Mulvy."

"You're a brick!"

Why the expression, "You're a brick," carries so much weight with boys, no one can analyze. But among any crowd of real boys, it is the limit of hero worship.

Frank had nothing to say and no time to say it. His presence there, fresh and eager for the fight, showed that the incident was passed and forgotten. The coach patted him on the back, and whispered, "You've got to save the day, kid, you can do it." And to them all it was, to compare little things with great, what the Yankees meant to Foch.

The squad on the field looked a different aggregation. And it was different. The wonderful thing "spirit" had permeated them.

It echoed in the rousing cheers which the Regal supporters gave them.

"Great Guns!" gasped Dick, just as Gaffney in front of the stand shouted through the megaphone, "A Rah, Rah for Regal." From thousands of throats came the inspiring, "Regal, Regal! Rah, Rah, Re—gal!"

"Now, fellows, a big Rah Rah for Mulvy!" Most of the spectators had supposed that Mulvy was crippled and that he was pressed into service as a last resort. Realizing that an injured gladiator who fights on is a hero, the response that came from the crowd was tremendous.

"Mulvy, Mulvy, Rah, Rah, Mul . . .vy!"

"Give him another," yelled Gaffney.

Again, louder and more intensely, rang out over the field, "Mulvy, Mulvy! Rah, Rah, Mul . . . vy!"

The Stanley crowd shot back their yell, "Stanley, Rah! Stanley, Rah! Rah! Rah! Stan....ley!"

The Stanley squad noticed Mulvy, but most of them thought he was crippled and would not last long. None guessed the real reason of his absence in the first half.

Again the whistle blew, the teams took their

formation, and with a mighty kick by Stanley the ball was in play. For a few moments there was no apparent difference in Regal's play. But soon it was noticed that they were going like a well-oiled machine. Stanley, too, seemed to be playing a better game. It was good football all around. They were well matched. It was to and fro again, but now there was no looseness on Regal's side. Any gain that was made against them was due to good work by Stanley, not to poor play by Regal.

Frank was playing well to the rear. All of a sudden Stanley got the ball, passed it to the fleetest runner, made an opening for him and gave him a clear field to Regal's line. Only Mulvy stood between him and a touchdown. The runner was tall and fast, fifteen pounds heavier than Frank, a big margin where a boy is concerned. He came tearing down the field with the ball. Frank rushed right across his path, stood his ground with a tigerish gleam and posture, and when his man approached, tackled him low, sending him sprawling to earth, the ball rolling away to one side. The coach leaped into the air, gave the bench a bang with his hand that

drew blood, and exclaimed between his teeth, "Grit."

The Regal crowd fairly went wild. Gaffney swung his arms like a wind mill, and worked his megaphone like a factory whistle, but it was all lost. Unmarshalled cheers shook the stand. Yells, shouts, slaps on the back, frenzy. It was Regal's first chance to let loose. The nervous tension was at the breaking point. It needed just this play to act as a safety valve. When Gaffney at last could get a hearing, he yelled—"A Rah Rah for Mulvy." With an enthusiasm that inspired the team on the field, they yelled:

"Mulvy, Mulvy! Rah, Rah, Mul . . . vy!"

"Another," shouted Gaffney.

"Mulvy, Mulvy! Rah, Rah, Mul . . . vy!"

"Now one for Regal, whoop it up, boys."

"Regal, Regal, Rah, Rah, Regal!"

The ball was snapped back to Bob, who gave it a kick that sent it right over the goal for three points. Again pandemonium. Again cheers. Stanley followers were beginning to get nervous. 8 to 3 was not dangerous, but it was the way Regal was going at it. "What

a difference one man makes," was heard on all sides.

The teams lined up again. Both were playing at top speed. They swayed to and fro. There were no slips, no mistakes. It was give and take, with the results about even. It kept on that way until the whistle blew and the third quarter was over.

The Regal crowd occupied the short interval cheering its team uninterruptedly. Stanley did the same.

The whistle blew again, and the battle was renewed. If Stanley could hold the score as it was, the victory was hers. Out from her side of the stands came the concerted yell,

"Stanley, hold! Stanley, hold! Stanley, hold!"

And that was their game. They held well. Eight minutes of the quarter had passed, and it began to look as if nothing could get through Stanley. It looked like her game. Then something happened.

The ball was passed to Mulvy. With the grace and speed of a hound, he made for the enemy line. Hardly had he started when a big Stanley player got right in front of him. By clever dodging Frank got by him. He had

just struck his stride when another opponent dashed across his path ready to spring at him. Frank came on full tilt, and just as a plunge was made for him, he stopped short, turned aside and the tackler went digging into the ground.

The crowd was wild now. Only one man stood between Mulvy and a touchdown, and victory. The coach was pulling his hat to pieces. The Regal followers were frantic with anticipation.

But Stanley's best tackle was waiting for Mulvy. He had seen how the other two were fooled, and was ready for every emergency. He was a cool, active big chap with lots of football instinct. Frank knew him. He had seen him play often. But on he ran like a deer, his hair blown back by the wind, his nostrils distended and his eyes aglow and determined. As he got near the barrier, he made as if he were going to keep right on. He came at top speed to within a foot of the tackle; then just as the tackle crouched low and sprang at him, Frank fell sidewise to the ground, rolled over, and before the tackle could rise, jumped to his feet, ran at full speed and crossed the line!

Lunacy was the word to describe what followed. Madness seized the crowd. Hats in the air, good hats. Fellows thumped one another, jumped up and down, yelled and bawled and screamed and cried. Hysteria was let loose. Regal knew that the game was won. The score now stood 9 to 8. As the teams were playing, Stanley could not score again. Regal took the ball and brought it down the field to try for a goal. Bob kicked it, and it went sailing just outside the mark. But no one minded. The fellows rushed to position for the continuation of the game. All the way down to their formation, it was nothing but "Bully Boy, Mulvy." "You saved the day, Mulvy." "You're a brick, Mulvy."

And from the crowd it was, "Mulvy, Mulvy! Rah, Rah, Mul....vy!" now from one section of the Regal stand, now from another.

The whistle blew, the fight was on again. Stanley made desperate efforts to regain the lead. Once or twice they almost succeeded in breaking through. The yell from their followers now took another form. "Stanley, gain! Stanley, gain! Stanley, gain!" They tried hard. They kept on trying to the very

end. The whistle blew, the game was over, Regal was Interscholastic Champion!

The noise that now broke out made all the previous demonstration seem mild in comparison. The Regal section of the stands was one mass of frenzied humanity. Men, women and boys yelled and slapped and thumped. Anything that could make a noise was commandeered and set in operation. It was temporary lunacy. The tense strain of nearly two hours let itself off in hysterically jubilant celebration.

But the real frenzy was on the field. The coach was fit to be caged. He yelled and bawled and danced. He pummelled everybody and everything within reach. All the reserve players were cheering and howling, boy fashion. The team itself was just one big satisfied smile. Their joy was too great for expression. They hugged one another. All of them tried to hug Frank at once.

"O let up," he yelled. "This is worse than the game." He tore himself loose. But not for long. He was blocked everywhere. The team surrounded him again, pitched him on the shoulders of the stoutest two, spite of his

opposition, and marched off to the dressing room.

"What's the matter with Mulvy? He's all right! Who's all right? Mul....vy!" They repeated that over and over again. As they got near the stand, the crowd took it up, Gaffney leading. "What's the matter with Mulvy? He's all right! Who's all right? Mulvy!"

About a hundred Regal boys with Gaffney at their head marched to Frank's home yelling, "What's the matter with Mulvy? He's all right! Who's all right? Mul....vy! Regal! Rah, Rah, Regal!—Mul....vy!"

They passed the rectory on their way to Frank's house. Gaffney yelled out, "Here, fellows, let's give a good one for Regal and Mulvy." The cheer rang out,

"Regal! Regal! Rah, Rah, Regal. What's the matter with Mulvy? He's all right! Who's all right? Mul....vy! Regal! Regal! Rah, Rah, Regal! Mulvy!"

Father Boone heard the yell and went to his window. It was the first news he had of the game. That yelling told him of victory, even before he heard what they were shouting. A defeated team goes home quietly. Not so the victors. He was glad beyond expression.

Four of the boys on the team were graduates of the Club. It was a great victory. But what touched him particularly was that other yell he heard. Regal was music to his ears, but Regal and Mulvy! That meant that Frank had done his share—more than his share. As he got to the window, the crowd was moving on. Every now and then he caught the refrain, "What's the matter with Mulvy? He's all right."

"Yes, he is all right, thank God," he said to himself.

All through Parkville the crowd marched. They were killing time until Frank should show up. Then they had their plans. After going to the High School, and giving the Regal Rah, and the Mulvy Rah, they paraded up and down the Avenue and over the cross streets until everyone knew that Mulvy was "all right." They waited and waited for Frank. But no Frank showed up.

Finally Gaffney said, "I know that kid. He has given us the slip. It's getting dark, fellows, let's go up to his house and give him a good yell and then scatter." So on they marched to Frank's home. It was bedlam as

soon as they got there. They yelled and yelled until the whole neighborhood was out. That was what they wanted.

Mr. Mulvy had just got home from his office. Mr. and Mrs. Mulvy and Frank's two elder brothers and his sisters came to the windows to see what was up. They had not heard of the result of the game. Mrs. Mulvy had just finished telling how they sent for Frank. What was their astonishment then to hear the yell,

"Regal! Regal! Rah, Rah, Regal! Mul.... vy! What's the matter with Mulvy? He's all right! Who's all right? Mul....vy!"

Mr. Mulvy looked suddenly at Mrs. Mulvy. The big tears were rolling down her cheeks.

"Why, what's the matter, dear, you should be proud and happy?"

"I am. But you don't understand."

(VI)

About ten minutes later, when the crowd had dispersed, Frank came quietly along the Avenue and over the street to his home. To his surprise the rooms were all lighted. He opened the door and received such a warm welcome that it took his breath away. All

rushed at him to shake him by the hand and pat him on the back and kiss him. All but his mother. His eyes ran over the room in search of her. He saw her in the big arm chair, her apron to her eyes, wiping away tears which only he understood. He ran into her arms. Neither said a word. They just embraced. Then she kissed him on the forehead. "You *are* all right, Frank," was all she said.

Of course, he told them all about the game. But it was not until Dick and Ned and Tommie came in to congratulate him that they heard his part in it. Dick was a word painter, and he drew such a picture of the game and of a "certain player" in it that a certain player blushed. But the father and mother and the sisters and brothers of a "certain player" started in all over again to maul him, and tell that player what they thought of him.

After dinner, with Tommy and Dick and Ned all present, Frank had to go down to the Club. He didn't want to—he knew how the fellows would maul him. But he did feel that Father Boone would expect him to be there.

The assembled fellows were hoping he would drop in. The boys who had resigned were

there, too. Frank's noble conduct had refuted all charges against himself and the Club. The crowd, knowing his quiet ways, feared that he would not come. But when he arrived, it was the same old thing over again. Cheers, hand-shakes, howling, thumping, the way that boys have of saying what they most want to say.

After a while, he went upstairs. Father Boone was expecting him. He entered smiling. Father Boone was smiling too. But as they looked at each other in silence, the strong man and the brave boy saw tears in each other's eyes. They grasped hands. And they looked, as it were, each into the other's soul. For they understood.

For a long time they sat in silence, pensive, peaceful. At length Father Boone broke the silence. It was no word of congratulation, no reference to the game.

"Well, Frank, God's way is the best way."

Another spell of silence. This was broken by Frank.

"I remember, Father, that you said life was a mirage. I've been thinking of poor Bill, and how he misunderstood us, and of how you were mistaken in me, and how I

misjudged you. We saw so much that really was not there at all."

"It's good to realize that so early in life, Frank. I've found from experience that most trouble comes from misunderstanding. Why God permits it, we do not know. I suppose it is to try us."

"You know so much about life, Father, why don't you write a book on it?"

"I may some day, Frank, and if I do I shall put you in it and call it 'Mirage.'"

THE END